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Put Pourself in Dis Place.

CHAPTER XL.



OCTOR AMBOYNE and Raby cried out, and tried to interfere; but Grace's movement was too swift, furious, and sudden; she was upon the man, with her stiletto high in the air, before they could get to her, and, indeed, the blow descended, and, inspired as it was, by love, and hate, and fury, would, doubtless, have buried the weapon in a rascal's body; but Jael Dence caught Grace's arm: that weakened, and also diverted the blow; yet the slight, keen weapon pierced Coventry's cheek, and even inflicted a slight wound upon the tongue. That very moment Jael Dence dragged her away, and held her round the

waist, writhing and striking the air; her white hand and bridal sleeve sprinkled with her bridegroom's blood.

As for him, his love, criminal as it was, supplied the place of heroism: he never put up a finger in defence. "No," said he, despairingly, "let me die by her hand, it is all I hope for now." He even drew near her to enable her to carry out her wish: but, on that, Jael Dence wrenched

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her round directly, and Doctor Amboyne disarmed her, and Raby marched between the bride and the bridegroom, and kept them apart: then they all drew their breath, for the first time, and looked aghast at each other.

Not a face in that room had an atom of colour left in it; yet it was

not until the worst was over, that they realized the savage scene.

The bridegroom leaned against the wardrobe, a picture of despair, with blood trickling from his cheek, and channelling his white waistcoat and linen; the bride, her white and bridal sleeve spotted with blood, writhed feebly in Jael Dence's arms, and her teeth clicked together, and her eyes shone wildly. At that moment she was on the brink of frenzy.

Raby, a man by nature and equal to great situations, was the first to recover self-possession, and see his way. "Silence!" said he, sternly.

"Amboyne, here's a wounded man, attend to him."

He had no need to say that twice: the Doctor examined his patient zealously, and found him bleeding from the tongue as well as the cheek; he made him fill his mouth with a constant supply of cold water, and applied cold water to the nape of his neck.

And now there was a knock at the door, and a voice inquired, rather impatiently, what they were about all this time. It was Mr. Carden's

voice.

They let him in, but instantly closed the door. "Now, hush!" said Raby, "and let me tell him." He then, in a very few hurried words, told him the matter. Coventry hung his head lower and lower.

Mr. Carden was terribly shaken. He could hardly speak for some time. When he did, it was in the way of feeble expostulation. "Oh,

my child! my child! what, would you commit murder?"

"Don't you see' I would," cried she, contemptuously, "sooner than he should do it, and suffer for it like a felon? You are all blind, and no friends of mine. I should have rid the earth of a monster, and they would never have hanged me. I hate you all, you worst of all, that call yourself my father, and drove me to marry this villain. One thing, you won't be always at hand to protect him."

"I'll give you every opportunity," said Coventry, doggedly. "You

shall kill me for loving you so madly."

"She shall do no such thing," said Mr. Carden. "Opportunity? do you know her so little as to think she will ever live with you? Get out of my house, and never presume to set foot in it again. My good friends, have pity on a miserable father, and help me to hide this monstrous thing from the world."

This appeal was not lost: the gentlemen put their heads together, and led Coventry into another room. There Doctor Amboyne attended to him, while Mr. Carden went down and told his guests the bridegroom had been taken ill, so seriously indeed that anxiety and alarm had taken the place of joy.

The guests took the hint and dispersed, wondering and curious.

Meantime, on one side of a plaster wall Amboyne was attending the

bridegroom, and stanching the effusion of blood; on the other, Raby and Jael Dence were bringing the bride to reason.

She listened to nothing they could say until they promised her most solemnly, that she should never be compelled to pass a night under the same roof as Frederick Coventry. That pacified her not a little.

Doctor Amboyne had also great trouble with his patient: the wound in the cheek was not serious: but, by a sort of physical retribution—of which, by the by, I have encountered many curious examples—the tongue, that guilty part of Frederick Coventry, though slightly punctured, bled so persistently, that Amboyne was obliged to fill his mouth with ice, and, at last, support him with stimulants. He peremptorily refused to let him be moved from Woodbine Villa.

When this was communicated to Grace, she instantly exacted Raby's promise; and, as he was a man who never went from his word, he drove her and Jael to Raby Hall that very night, and they left Coventry in the villa, attended by a surgeon, under whose care Amboyne had left him with strict injunctions. Mr. Carden was secretly mortified at his daughter's retreat, but raised no objection.

Next morning, however, he told Coventry; and then Coventry insisted on leaving the house. "I am unfortunate enough," said he: "do not let me separate my only friend from his daughter."

Mr. Carden sent a carriage off to Raby Hall, with a note, telling Grace Mr. Coventry was gone of his own accord, and appeared truly penitent, and much shocked at having inadvertently driven her out of the house. He promised also to protect her, should Coventry break his word, and attempt to assume marital rights without her concurrence.

This letter found Grace in a most uncomfortable position. Mrs. Little had returned late to Raby Hall; but, in the morning, she heard from Jael Dence that Grace was in the house, and why?

The mother's feathers were up, and she could neither pity nor excuse. She would not give the unhappy girl a word of comfort. Indeed she sternly refused to see her. "No," said she: "Mrs. Coventry is unhappy; so this is no time to show her how thoroughly Henry Little's mother despises her."

These bitter words never reached poor Grace, but the bare fact of Mrs. Little not coming downstairs by one o'clock, nor sending a civil message, spoke volumes, and Grace was sighing over it, when her father's letter came. She went home directly, and so heart-broken, that Jael Dence pitied her deeply, and went with her, intending to stay a day or two only.

But, every day, something or other occurred, which combined with Grace's prayers to keep her at Woodbine Villa.

Mr. Coventry remained quiet for some days, by which means he pacified Grace's terrors...

On the fourth day, Mr. Beresford called at Woodbine Villa, and Grace received him, he being the curate of the parish.

He spoke to her in a sympathetic tone, which let her know at once he was partly in the secret. He said he had just visited a very guilty, but penitent man; that we all need forgiveness, and that a woman, once married, has no chance of happiness, but with her husband.

Grace maintained a dead silence, only her eye began to glitter.

Mr. Beresford, who had learned to watch the countenance of all those he spoke to, changed his tone immediately, from a spiritual to a secular adviser.

"If I were you," said he, in rather an off-hand way, "I would either forgive this man the sin into which his love has betrayed him, or I would try to get a divorce. This would cost money: but, if you don't mind expense, I think I could suggest a way——"

Grace interrupted him. "From whom did you learn my misery, and his villany? I let you in, because I thought you came from God; but you come from a villain. Go back, sir, and say that an angel, sent by him, becomes a devil in my eyes." And she rang the bell with a look

that spoke volumes.

Mr. Beresford bowed, smiled bitterly, and went back to Coventry, with whom he had a curious interview, that ended in Coventry lending him two hundred pounds on his personal security. To dispose of Mr. Beresford for the present, I will add that, soon after this, his zeal for the poor subjected him to an affront. He was a man of soup-kitchens and subscriptions. One of the old fogies, who disliked him, wrote letters to The Liberal, and demanded an account of his receipts and expenditure in these worthy objects, and repeated the demand with a pertinacity that implied suspicion. Then Mr. Beresford called upon Doctor Fynes, and showed him the letters, and confessed to him that he never kept any accounts, either of public or private expenditure. "I can construe Apollonius Rhodius-with your assistance, sir,"-said he; "but I never could add up pounds, shillings and pence; far less divide them, except amongst the afflicted." "Take no notice of the cads," said Doctor Fynes. But Beresford represented meekly that a clergyman's value and usefulness were gone when once a slur was thrown upon him. Then Doctor Fynes gave him high testimonials, and they parted with mutual regret.

It took Grace a day to get over her interview with Mr. Beresford; and when, with Jael's help, she was calm again, she received a letter from Coventry, indited in tones of the deepest penitence, but reminding her that he had offered her his life, had made no resistance when she offered

to take it, and never would.

There was nothing in the letter that irritated her; but she saw in it an attempt to open a correspondence.

She wrote back :-

"If you really repent your crimes, and have any true pity for the poor creature whose happiness you have wrecked, show it by leaving this place, and ceasing all communication with her." This galled Coventry, and he wrote back :-

"What, leave the coast clear to Mr. Little? No, Mrs. Coventry; no."

Grace made no reply, but a great terror seized her, and from that hour preyed constantly on her mind—the fear that Coventry and Little would meet, and the man she loved would do some rash act, and perhaps perish on the scaffold for it.

This was the dominant sentiment of her distracted heart, when one day, at eleven A.M., came a telegram from Liverpool:—

"Just landed. Will be with you by four.

"HENRY LITTLE."

Jael found her shaking all over, with this telegram in her hand.

"Thank God you are with me," she gasped. "Let me see him once more, and die."

This was her first thought; but, all that day, she was never in the same mind for long together. She would burst out into joy that he was really alive, and she should see his face once more. Then she would cower with terror, and say she dared not look him in the face, she was not worthy. Then she would ask wildly, who was to tell him? What would become of him?

"It would break his heart, or destroy his reason."

"After all he had done and suffered for her!"

Oh! why could not she die before he came? Seeing her dead body, he would forgive her. She should tell him she loved him still, should always love him. She would withhold no comfort. Perhaps he would kill her. If so, Jael must manage so that he should not be taken up or tormented any more, for such a wretch as she was.

But I might as well try to dissect a storm, and write the gusts of a tempest, as to describe all the waves of passion in that fluctuating and agonized heart: the feelings and the agitation of a life were crowded into those few hours, during which she awaited the lover she had lost.

At last, Jael Dence, though she was also much agitated and perplexed, decided on a course of action. Just before four o'clock, she took Grace upstairs, and told her she might see him arrive: but she must not come down, until she was sent for. "I shall see him first, and tell him all: and, when he is fit to see you, I will let you know."

Grace submitted, and even consented to lie down for half-an-hour. She was, now in truth, scarcely able to stand, being worn out with the mental struggle. She lay passive, with Jael Dence's hand in hers.

When she had lain so about an hour, she started up suddenly, and the next moment a fly stopped at the door. Henry Little got out at the gate, and walked up the gravel to the house.

Grace looked at him from behind the curtain, gazed at him till he

disappeared, and then turned round, with seraphic joy on her countenance. "My darling!" she murmured; "more beautiful than ever! O misery! misery!"

One moment her heart was warm with rapture, the next it was cold with despair. But the joy was blind love; the despair was reason.

She waited, and waited, but no summons came.

She could not deny herself the sound of his voice. She crept down the stairs, and into her father's library; separated only by thin foldingdoors from the room where Henry Little was with Jael Dence.

Meantime Jael Dence opened the door to Henry Little, and, putting her finger to her lips, led him into the dining-room, and shut the door.

Now, as his suspicions were already excited, this reception alarmed him seriously. As soon as ever they were alone, he seized both Jael's hands, and, looking her full in the face, said:—

"One word - is she alive?"

" She is."

"Thank God! Bless the tongue that tells me that. My good Jael! my best friend!" And, with that, kissed her heartily on both cheeks.

She received this embrace like a woman of wood; a faint colour rose, but retired directly, and left her cheek as pale as before.

He noticed her strange coldness, and his heart began to quake.

"There is something the matter?" he whispered.

"There is."

"Something you don't like to tell me?"

"Like to tell you! I need all my courage, and you yours."

"Say she is alive, once more."

"She is alive, and not likely to die: but she does not care to live now. They told her you were dead: they told her you were false: appearances were such she had no chance not to be deceived. She held out for a long time; but they got the better of her—her father is much to blame—she is—married."

" Married!

" Yes!"

"Married!" He leaned, sick as death, against the mantelpiece, and gasped so terribly that Jael's fortitude gave way, and she began to cry.

After a long time, he got a word or two out in a broken voice.

"The false—inconstant—wretch! O heaven! what I have done and suffered for her—and now married!—married! And the earth doesn't swallow her, nor the thunder strike her! Curse her, curse her husband, curse her children; may her name be a by-word for shame and misery——"

"Hush! hush! or you will curse your own mad tongue. Hear all,

before you judge her."

"I have heard all; she is a wife; she shall soon be a widow. Thought I was false! What business had she to think I was false? It

is only false hearts that suspect true ones. She thought me dead? Why? Because I was out of sight. She heard there was a dead hand found in the river. Why didn't she go and see it? Could all creation pass another hand off on me for hers? No; for I loved her. She never loved me."

"She loved you; and loves you still. When that dead hand was found, she fell swooning, and lay at death's door for you, and now she has stained her hands with blood for you. She tried to kill her husbaud, the moment she found you were alive and true, and he had made a fool of her."

"Tried to kill him! Why didn't she do it? I should not have failed at such work. I love her."

"Blame me for that: I stopped her arm, and I am stronger than she is. I say she is no more to blame than you. You have acted like a madman, and she suffers for it. Why did you slip away at night, like that, and not tell me?"

"I left letters to you and her, and other people besides."

"Yes, left them, and hadn't the sense to post them. Why didn't you tell me? Had ever any young man as faithful and true a friend in any young woman as you had in me? Many a man has saved a woman's life, but it isn't often that a woman fights for a man, and gets the upper hand: yet you gave me nothing in return; not even your confidence. Look the truth in the face, my lad: all your trouble, and all hers, comes of your sneaking out of Hillsborough in that daft way, without a word to me, the true friend, that was next door to you: which I nearly lost my life by your fault; for, if you had told me, I should have seen you off, and so escaped a month's hospital, and other troubles that almost drove me crazy. Don't you abuse that poor young lady before me, or I shan't spare you. She is more to be pitied than you are. Folk should look at home for the cause of their troubles: her misery, and yours, it is all owing to your own folly and ingratitude: ay, you may look; I mean what I say—ingratitude."

The attack was so sudden and powerful, that Henry Little was staggered and silenced; but an unexpected defender appeared on the scene: one of the folding-doors was torn open, and Grace darted in.

"How dare you say it is his fault, poor ill-used angel! No, no, no, no; I am the only one to blame. I didn't love you as you deserved. I tried to die for you; and failed. I tried to kill that monster for you; and failed. I am too weak and silly; I shall only make you more unhappy. Give me one kiss, my own darling, and then kill me out of the way." With this she was over his knees, and round his neck in a moment, weeping, and clutching him with a passionate despair, that melted all his anger away, and soon his own tears fell on her like rain.

"Ah, Grace! Grace!" he sobbed, "how could you? how could you?"

"Don't speak unkindly to her," cried Jael, "or she won't be alive a day. She is worse off than you are; and so is he too."

"You mock me: he is her husband. He can make her live with him. He can-" Here he broke out cursing and blaspheming, and called Grace a viper, and half thrust her away from him with horror, and his face filled with jealous anguish; he looked like a man dying of poison.

Then he rose to his feet, and said, with a sort of deadly calm, "Where can I find the man?"

"Not in this house, you may be sure, " said Jael: "nor in any house where she is."

Henry sank into his seat again, and looked amazed.

"Tell him all," said Grace. "Don't let him think I do not love him at all."

"I will," said Jael. "Well, the wedding was at eleven; your letter came at half-past twelve, and I took it her. Soon after that, the villain came to her, and she stabbed him directly with this stiletto. Look at it: there's his blood upon it: I kept it to show you. I caught her arm, or she would have killed him, I believe. He lost so much blood, the doctor would not let him be moved. Then she thought of you still, and would not pass a night under the same roof with him; at two o'clock she was on the way to Raby: but Mr. Coventry was too much of a man to stay in the house and drive her out; so he went off next morning, and, as soon as she heard that, she came home. She is wife and no wife, as the saying is, and how it is all to end, heaven only knows."

"It will end the moment I meet the man: and that won't be long."

"There! there!" cried Grace, "that is what I feared. Ah, Jael! Jael! why did you hold my hand? They would not have hung me. I told you so at the time: I knew what I was about."

"Jael," said the young man, "of all the kind things you have done for me, that was the kindest. You saved my poor girl from worse trouble than she is now in. No, Grace; you shall not dirty your hand with such

seum as that : it is my business, and mine only."

In vain did Jael expostulate, and Grace implore. In vain did Jael assure him that Coventry was in a worse position than himself, and try to make him see that any rash act of his would make Grace even more miserable than she was at present. He replied that he had no intention of running his neck into a halter; he should act warily, like the Hillsborough trades, and strike his blow so cunningly, that the criminal should never know whence it came. "I've been in a good school for homicide," said he; "and I am an inventor. No man has ever played the executioner so ingeniously as I will play it. Think of all this scoundrel has done to me: he owes me a dozen lives, and I'll take one. Man shall never detect me: God knows all, and will forgive me, I hope. If He doesn't, I can't help it."

He kissed Grace again and again, and comforted her; said she was not to blame; honest people were no match for villains: if she had been twice as simple, he would have forgiven her at sight of the stiletto; that cleared her, in his mind, better than words.

He was now soft and gentle as a lamb. He begged Jael's pardon humbly, for leaving Hillsborough without telling her. He said he had gone up to her room; but all was still; and he was a working man, and the sleep of a working woman was sacred to him—(he would have awakened a fine lady, without ceremony). He assured her he had left a note for her in his box, thanking and blessing her for all her goodness. He said that he hoped he might yet live to prove by acts, and not by idle words, how deeply he felt all she had done and suffered for him.

Jael received these excuses in hard silence. "That is enough about me," said she, coldly. "If you are grateful to me, show it by taking my advice. Leave vengeance to Him who has said that vengeance is His."

The man's whole manner changed directly, and he said doggedly,-

"Well, I will be His instrument."

"He will choose his own."

"I'll lend my humble co-operation."

"Oh, do not argue with him," said Grace, piteously. "When did a man ever yield to our arguments? Dearest, I can't argue: but I am full of misery, and full of fears. You see my love; you forgive my folly. Have pity on me; think of my condition: do not doom me to live in terror by night and day: have I not enough to endure, my own darling? There, promise me you will do nothing rash to-night, and that you will come to me the first thing to-morrow. Why, you have not seen your mother yet; she is at Raby Hall."

"My dear mother!" said he: "it would be a poor return for all your love, if I couldn't put off looking for that scum till I have taken you in my arms."

And so Grace got a reprieve.

They parted in deep sorrow, but almost as lovingly as ever, and Little went at once to Raby Hall, and Grace, exhausted by so many emotions, lay helpless on a couch in her own room all the rest of the day.

For some time she lay in utter prostration, and only the tears that trickled at intervals down her pale cheeks showed that she was conscious of her miserable situation.

Jael begged and coaxed her to take some nourishment: but she shook her head with disgust at the very idea.

For all that, at nine o'clock, her faithful friend almost forced a few spoonfuls of tea down her throat, feeding her like a child: and, when she had taken it, she tried to thank her, but choked in the middle, and, flinging her arm round Jael's neck, burst into a passion of weeping, and incoherent cries of love, and pity, and despair. "Oh, my darling! so great! so noble! so brave! so gentle! And I have destroyed us both! He forgave me, as soon as he saw me. So terrible, so gentle! What will be the next calamity? Ah Jael! save him from that rash act, and I shall never complain; for he was dead, and is alive again."

"We will find some way to do that between us, you, and I, and his mother."

"Ah, yes: she will be on my side, in that. But she will be hard upon me. She will point out all my faults; my execrable folly. Ah, if I could but live my time over again, I'd pray night and day for selfishness. They teach us girls to pray for this and that virtue, which we have too much of already; and what we ought to pray for is selfishness. But no! I must think of my father, and think of that hypocrite; but the one person whose feelings I was too mean, and base, and silly to consult, was myself. I always abhorred this marriage. I feared it, and loathed it; yet I yielded step by step, for want of a little selfishness: we are slaves without it, mean, pitful, contemptible slaves. O God, in mercy give me selfishness! Ah me, it is too late now. I am a lost creature; nothing is left me but to die."

Jael got her to bed, and sleep came at last to her exhausted body; but, even when her eyes were closed, tears found their way through the lids, and wetted her pillow.

So can great hearts, and loving natures suffer.

Can they enjoy in proportion?

Let us hope so. But I have my doubts.

Henry Little kept his word, and came early next morning. He looked hopeful and excited: he said he had thought the matter over, and was quite content to let that scoundrel live; and even to dismiss all thought of him, if Grace really loved him.

"I know you love me, Grace: but do you love me enough? Will you give up the world for me, and let us be happy together, the only way we can? My darling Grace, I have made our fortune; all the world lies before us; I left England alone, for you; now leave it with me, and let us roam the world together."

"Henry !--what !--when I cannot be your wife !"

"You can be my wife; my wife in reality, as you are his in name and nothing else. It is idle to talk as if we were in some ordinary situation. There are plenty of countries that would disown such a marriage as yours, a mere ceremony obtained by fraud, and cancelled by a stroke with a dagger and instant separation. Oh, my darling, don't sacrifice both our lives to a scruple that is out of place here. Don't hesitate; don't delay. I have a carriage waiting outside; end all our misery by one act of courage, and trust yourself to me; did I ever fail you?"

" For shame, Henry, for shame!"

- "It is the only way to happiness. You were quite right; if I kill that wretch we shall be parted in another way, always parted; now we can be together for life. Remember, dearest, how I begged you in this very room to go to the United States with me: you refused: well, have you never been sorry you refused? Now I once more implore you to be wise and brave, and love me as I love you. What is the world to us? You are all the world to me."
 - "Answer him, Jael, oh answer him!"

"Nay, these are things every woman must answer for herself."

"And I'll take no answer but yours." Then he threw himself at her feet, and clasping her in his arms, implored her, with all the sighs and tears and eloquence of passion, to have pity on them both, and fly at once with him.

She writhed and struggled faintly, and turned away from him, and fell tenderly towards him, by turns, and still he held her tight, and grew stronger, more passionate, more persuasive, as she got weaker and almost faint. Her body seemed on the point of sinking, and her mind of yielding.

But all of a sudden she made a desperate effort. "Let me go," she cried. "So this is your love! With all my faults and follies, I am truer than you. Shame on your love that would dishonour the creature you love. Let me go, sir, I say, or I shall hate you worse than I do the wretch whose name I bear."

He let her go directly, and then her fiery glance turned to one long lingering look of deep but tender reproach, and she fled sobbing.

He sank into a chair, and buried his face in his hands.

After a while, he raised his head, and saw Jael Dence looking gravely at him.

"Oh, speak your mind," said he, bitterly.

"You are like the world. You think only of yourself: that's all I have to say."

"You are very unkind to say so. I think for us both: and she will think with me, in time. I shall come again to-morrow."

He said this with an iron resolution that promised a long and steady struggle, to which Grace, even in this first encounter, had shown herself hardly equal.

Jael went to her room, expecting to find her as much broken down as she was by Henry's first visit; but, instead of that, the young lady was walking rapidly to and fro.

At sight of Jael, she caught her by the hand, and said, "Well!"

"He is coming again to-morrow."

"Is he sorry?"

" Not he."

"Who would have thought he was so wicked?"

This seemed rather exaggerated to Jael; for with all Mrs. Little's

teaching she was not quite a lady yet in all respects, though in many things she was always one by nature. "Let it pass," said she.

"It is a man's part to try, And a woman's to deny."

"And how often shall I have to deny him I love so dearly?"

"As often as he asks you to be his mistress; for, call it what you like, that is all he has to offer you."

Grace hid her face in her hands.

Jael coloured. "Excuse my blunt speaking; but sometimes the worst word is the best: fine words are just words with a veil on."

"Will he dare to tempt me again, after what I said?"

"Of course he will: don't you know him? he never gives in. But,

suppose he does, you have your answer ready."

"Jael," said Grace, "you are so strong, it blinds you to my weakness. I resist him, day after day! I, who pity him so, and blame myself! Why his very look, his touch, his voice, overpower me so that my whole frame seems dissolving: feel how I tremble at him, even now. No, no; let those resist who are sure of their strength. Virtue, weakened by love and pity, has but one resource—to fly. Jael Dence, if you are a woman, help me to save the one thing I have got left to save."

"I will," said Jael Dence.

In one hour from that time they had packed a box, and a carpet-bag, and were on their way to a railway-station. They left Hillsborough.

In three days Jael returned, but Grace Coventry did not come back with her.

The day after that trying scene, Henry Little called, not to urge Grace again, as she presumed he would, but to ask pardon: at the same time we may be sure of this, that, after a day or two spent in obtaining pardon, the temptation would have been renewed, and so on for ever. Of this, however, Little was not conscious; he came to ask pardon, and offer a pure and patient love, till such time as heaven should have pity on them both. He was informed that Mrs. Coventry had quitted Hillsborough, and left a letter for him. It was offered him, he snatched it and read it:—

" MY OWN DEAR HENRY,-

"You have given me something to forgive, and I forgive you without asking, as I hope you will one day forgive me. I have left Hillsborough, to avoid a situation that was intolerable, and solicitations which I blushed to hear, and for which you would one day have blushed too. This parting is not for ever, I hope; but that rests with yourself. Forego your idea of vengeance on that man, whose chastisement you would best alleviate by ending his miserable existence; and learn to love me honourably and patiently, as I love you. Should you obtain this

great victory over yourself, you will see me again. Meantime, think of her who loves you to distraction, and whose soul hovers about you unseen. Pray for me, dear one, at midnight, and at eight o'clock every morning; for those are two of the hours I shall pray for you. Do you remember the old church, and how you cried over me? I can write no more: my tears blind me so. Farewell.

"Your unhappy "GRACE."

Little read this piteous letter, and it was a heavy blow to him; a blow that all the tenderness shown in it could not at first soften. She had fled from him; she shunned him. It was not from Coventry she fled; it was from him.

He went home cold, and sick at heart, and gave himself up to grief and deep regrets for several days.

But soon his powerful and elastic mind, impatient of impotent sorrow, and burning for some kind of action, seized upon vengeance as the only thing left to do.

At this period he looked on Coventry as a beast in human shape, whom he had a moral right to extinguish; only, as he had not a legal right, it must be done with consummate art. He trusted nobody; spoke to nobody; but set himself quietly to find out where Coventry lived, and what were his habits. He did this with little difficulty. Coventry lodged in a principal street; but always dined at a club, and returned home late, walking through a retired street or two; one of these passed by the mouth of a narrow court that was little used.

Little, disguised as a workman, made a complete reconnaissance of this locality, and soon saw that his enemy was at his mercy.

But, while he debated within himself what measure of vengeance he should take, and what noiseless weapon he should use, an unseen antagonist baffled him. That antagonist was Grace Carden. Still foreboding mischief, she wrote to Mr. Coventry, from a town two hundred miles distant:—

"Whatever you are now, you were born a gentleman, and will, I think, respect a request from a lady you have wronged. Mr. Little has returned, and I have left Hillsborough; if he encounters you in his despair, he will do you some mortal injury. This will only make matters worse, and I dread the scandal that will follow; and to hear my sad story in a court of law as a justification for his violence. Oblige me, then, by leaving Hillsborough for a time, as I have done."

On receipt of this, Coventry packed up his portmanteau directly, and, leaving Lally behind to watch the town, and see whether this was a ruse, he went directly to the town whence Grace's letter was dated, and to the very hotel.

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This she had foreseen and intended.

He found she had been there, and had left for a neighbouring watering-place: he followed her thither, and there she withdrew the clue; she left word she was gone to Stirling; but doubled on him, and soon put hundreds of miles between them. He remained in Scotland, hunting her.

Thus she played the grey plover with him she hated, and kept the beloved hands from crime.

When Little found that Coventry had left Hillsborough, he pretended to himself that he was glad of it. "My darling is right," said he. "I will obey her, and do nothing contrary to law. I will throw him into prison, that is all." With these moderated views, he called upon his friend Ransome, whom of course he had, as yet, carefully avoided, to ask his aid in collecting the materials for an indictment. He felt sure that Coventry had earned penal servitude, if the facts could only be put in evidence. He found Ransome in low spirits, and that excellent public servant being informed what he was wanted for, said drily, "Well, but this will require some ability: don't you think your friend Silly Billy would be more likely to do it effectually than John Ransome?"

"Why, Ransome, are you mad?"

"No, I merely do myself justice. Silly Billy smelt that faulty grindstone; and I can't smell a rat a yard from my nose, it seems. You shall judge for yourself. There have been several burglaries in this town, of late, and planned by a master. This put me on my mettle, and I have done all I could, with my small force, and even pried about in person, night after night, and that is not exactly my business, but I felt it my duty. Well, sir, two nights ago, no more, I had the luck to come round a corner right upon a job: Alderman Dick's house, full of valuables, and the windows well guarded; but one of his cellars is only covered with a heavy wooden shutter, bolted within. I found this open, and a board wedged in, to keep it ajar: down I went on my knees, saw a light inside, and heard two words of thieves' latin; that was enough, you know; I whipped out the board, jumped on the heavy shutter, and called for the police."

"Did you expect them to come?"

"Not much. These jobs are timed so as not to secure the attendance of the police. But assistance of another kind came; a gentleman full dressed, in a white, tie and gloves, ran up, and asked me what it was. 'Thieves in the cellar,' said I, and shouted police, and gave my whistle. The gentleman jumped on the shutter. 'I can keep that down,' said he. 'I'm sure I saw two policemen in Acorn Street: run quick;' and he showed me his sword-cane, and seemed so hearty in it, and confident, I ran round the corner, and gave my whistle. Two policemen came up; but, in that moment, the swell accomplice had pulled all his pals out of the cellar, and all I saw of the lot, when I came back, was the swell's swallow-tail coat flying like the wind towards a back slum, where

I and my bobbies should have been knocked on the head, if we had tried to follow him; but indeed he was too fleet to give us the chance."

"Well," said Henry, "that was provoking: but who can foresee everything all in a moment? I have been worse duped than that a good many times."

Ransome shook his head. "An old officer of police, like me, not to smell a swell accomplice. I had only to handcuff that man, and set him down with me on the shutter, till, in the dispensation of Providence, a bobby came by."

He added by way of corollary,—"You should send to London for a detective."

"Not I," said Henry. "I know you for a sagacious man, and a worthy man, and my friend. I'll have no one to help me in it but you."

"Won't you?" said Ransome. "Then I'll go in. You have done me good, Mr. Little, by sticking to a defeated friend like this. Now for your case: tell me all you know, and how you know it."

Henry complied, and Ransome took his notes. Then he said, he had got some old memoranda by him, that might prove valuable: he would call in two days.

He did call, and showed Henry Coventry's card, and told him he had picked it up close by his letter-box, on the very night of the explosion. "Mark my words, this will expand into something," said the experienced officer.

Before he left, he told Henry that he had now every reason to believe the swell accomplice was Shifty Dick, the most successful and distinguished criminal in England. "I have just got word from London that he has been working here, and has collared a heavy swag; says he will go into trade: one of his old pals let that out in gaol. Trade! then heaven help his customers, that is all."

"You may catch him yet."

"When I catch Jack-a-lantern. He is not so green as to stay a day in Hillsborough, now his face has been close to mine: they all know I never forget a face. No, no; I shall never see him again, till I am telegraphed for, to inspect his mug and his wild-cat eyes in some gaol or other. I must try and not think of him; it disturbs my mind, and takes off my attention from my duties.

Ransome adhered to this resolution for more than a month, during which time he followed out every indication with the patience of a beagle; and, at last, he called one day, and told Little, Hill had forfeited his bail, and gone to Canada at the expense of the trade; but had let out strange things before he left. There was a swell concerned in his attempt with the bow and arrow: there was a swell concerned in the explosion, with some workman, whose name he concealed; he had seen them on the bridge, and had seen the workman receive a bag of gold, and had collared him, and demanded his share; this had been given him, but not until he threatened to call the bobbies. "Now, if we could find Hill, and get him

to turn Queen's evidence, this, coupled with what you and I could furnish, would secure your man ten years of penal servitude. I know an able officer at Quebec. Is it worth while going to the expense?"

Little, who had received the whole communication in a sort of despondent, apathetic way, replied that he didn't think it was worth while. "My good friend," said he, "I am miserable. Vengeance, I find, will not fill a yearning heart. And the truth is, that all this time I have been secretly hoping she would return, and that has enabled me to bear up, and chatter about revenge. Who could believe a young creature like that would leave her father and all her friends for good? I made sure she would come back in a week or two. And to think that it is I who have driven her away, and darkened my own life. I thought I had sounded the depths of misery. I was a fool to think so. No, no; life would be endurable if I could only see her face once a day, and hear her voice, though it was not even speaking to me. Oh! oh!"

Now this was the first time Little had broken down before Ransome. Hitherto, he had spoken of Coventry, but not of Grace; he had avoided speaking of her, partly from manly delicacy, partly because he foresaw his fortitude would give way, if he mentioned her.

But now the strong man's breast seemed as if it would burst, and his gasping breath, and restless body, betrayed what a price he must have paid for the dogged fortitude he had displayed for several weeks, love-sick all the time.

Ransome was affected: he rose, and walked about the room, ashamed to look at a Spartan broken down.

When he had given Little time to recover some little composure, he said, "Mr. Little, you were always too much of a gentleman to gossip about the lady you love; and it was not my business to intrude upon that subject; it was too delicate. But, of course, with what I have picked up here and there, and what you have let drop, without the least intending it, I know pretty well how the land lies. And, sir, a man does not come to my time of life without a sore and heavy heart; if I was to tell you how I came to be a bachelor —— but, no; even after ten years, I could not answer for myself. All I can say is that, if you should do me the honour to consult me on something that is nearer your heart than revenge, you would have all my sympathy, and all my zeal."

"Give me your hand, old fellow," said Little, and broke down again.

But, this time, he shook it off quickly, and, to encourage him,

Mr. Ransome said, "To begin, you may take my word Mr. Carden knows,

by this time, where his daughter is. Why not sound him on the matter?"

Henry acted on this advice, and called on Mr. Carden.

He was received very coldly by that gentleman.

After some hesitation he asked Mr. Carden if he had any news of his daughter.

" I have."

The young man's face was irradiated with joy directly.

" Is she well, sir?"

" Yes."

"Is she happier than she was?"

"She is content."

"Has she friends about her? Kind, good people; any persons of her own sex, whom she can love?"

"She is among people she takes for angels, at present. She will find them to be petty, mean, malicious devils. She is in a Protestant convent."

"In a convent? Where?"

"Where? Where neither the fool nor the villain, who have wrecked her happiness between them, and robbed me of her, will ever find her. I expected this visit, sir; the only thing I doubted was which would come first, the villain or the fool? The fool has come first, and, being a fool, expects me to tell him where to find his victim, and torture her again. Begone, fool, from the house you have made desolate by your execrable folly in slipping away by night like a thief, or rather like that far more dangerous animal, a fool."

The old man delivered these insults with a purple face, and a loud fury, that in former days would have awakened corresponding rage in the fiery young fellow. But affliction had tempered him, and his insulter's hairs were grey.

He said, quietly, "You are her father. I forgive you these cruel words." Then he took his hat, and went away.

Mr. Carden followed him to the passage, and cried after him, "The villain will meet a worse reception than the fool. I promise you that much."

Little went home despondent, and found a long letter from his mother, telling him he must dine and sleep at Raby Hall that day.

She gave him such potent reasons, and showed him so plainly his refusal would infuriate his uncle, and make her miserable, that he had no choice. He packed up his dress suit, and drove to Raby Hall, with a heavy heart, and bitter reluctance.

O cæca mens hominum!

CHAPTER XLI.

It was the great anniversary. On that day Sir Richard Raby had lost for the Stuarts all the head he possessed. His faithful descendant seized the present opportunity to celebrate the event with more pomp than ever. A month before the fatal day he came in from Hillsborough with sixty yards of violet-coloured velvet, the richest could be got from Lyons: he put this down on a table, and told his sister that was for her and Jael to wear on the coming anniversary. "Don't tell me there's not enough," said he; "for I inquired how much it would take to carpet two small rooms, and bought it; now what will carpet two little libraries will clothe two large ladies; and you are neither of you shrimps."

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While he was thus doing the cynical, nobody heeded him: quick and skilful fingers were undoing the parcel, and the ladies' cheeks flushed, and their eyes glistened, and their fingers felt the stuff inside and out; in which occupation Raby left them, saying, "Full dress, mind! We Rabys are not beheaded every day."

Mrs. Little undertook to cut both dresses, and Jael was to help sew them.

But, when they came to be tried on, Jael was dismayed. "Why, I shall be half naked," said she. "Oh, Mrs. Little, I couldn't: I should sink with shame."

Mrs. Little pooh-poohed that, and an amusing dialogue followed between these two women, both of them equally modest, but one hardened, and perhaps a little blinded, by custom.

Neither could convince the other, but Mrs. Little overpowered Jael by saying, "I shall wear mine low, and you will mortally offend my brother if you don't."

Then Jael succumbed, but looked forward to the day with a simple terror one would hardly have expected from the general strength of her character.

Little arrived and saw his mother for a minute or two before dinner. She seemed happy and excited, and said, "Cheer up, darling, we will find a way to make you happy. Mark my words, a new era in your life dates from to-day: I mean to open your eyes to-night. There, don't question me, but give me one kiss and let us go and make ourselves splendid for poor Sir Richard."

When Little came downstairs he found his uncle and a distinguished-looking young gentleman standing before the fire: both were in full dress. Raby had the Stuart orders on his breast, and looked a prince. He introduced Little to Mr. Richard Raby with high formality; but, before they had time to make acquaintance, two ladies glided into the room, and literally dazzled the young men, especially Dissolute Dick, who knew neither of them.

Mrs. Little, with her oval face, black brow and hair, and stately but supple form, was a picture of matronly beauty and grace; her rich brunette skin, still glossy and firm, showed no signs of age; but under her glorious eyes, were the marks of trouble, and though her face was still striking and lovely, yet it revealed what her person concealed, that she was no longer young. That night she looked about eight-and-thirty.

The other lady was blonde, and had a face less perfect in contour, but beautiful in its way, and exquisite in colour and peach-like bloom: but the marvel was her form; her comely head, dignified on this occasion with a coronet of pearls, perched on a throat long yet white and massive, and smooth as alabaster; and that majestic throat sat enthroned on a

snowy bust and shoulders of magnificent breadth, depth, grandeur, and beauty. Altogether it approached the gigantic: but so lovely was the swell of the broad white bosom, and so exquisite the white and polished skin of the mighty shoulders adorned with two deep dimples, that the awe this grand physique excited was mingled with profound admiration.

Raby and Henry Little both started at the sudden grandeur and brilliance of the woman they thought they knew, but in reality had never seen her; and Raby, dazzled himself, presented her, quite respectfully, to

Dissolute Dick.

"This is Miss Dence, a lady descended, like the rest of us, from poor

Sir Richard; Miss Dence; Mr. Richard Raby."

Jael blushed more deeply than ladies with white and antique busts are in the habit of doing, and it was curious to see the rosy tint come on her white neck, and then die quietly away again. Yet she curtsied with grace and composure. (Mrs. Little had trained her at all points; and grace comes pretty readily, where nature has given perfect symmetry.)

Dinner was announced, and Raby placed the Dissolute between his sister and the magnificent Beauty dead Sir Richard had developed. He

even gave a reason for this arrangement.

"All you ladies like a Rake: you praise sober fellows like me; but what you prefer is a Rake."

As they were rustling into their places, Mrs. Little said to Dick, with a delicious air of indifference, "Are you a rake, Mr. Raby?"

"I am anything you like," replied the shameless fellow.

All the old plate was out, and blazing in the light of candles innumerable.

There was one vacant chair.

Dick asked if there was anybody expected.

"Not much," said Raby drily. "That is Sir Richard's chair, on these occasions. However, he may be sitting in it now, for aught I know. I sincerely hope he is."

"If I thought that, I'd soon leave mine," said Jael, in a tremulous whisper.

"Then stay where you are, Sir Richard," said the Rake, making an affected motion with his handkerchief, as if to keep the good Knight down.

In short, this personage, being young, audacious, witty, and animated by the vicinity of the most beautiful creature he had ever seen, soon deprived the anniversary of that solemn character Mr. Raby desired to give it. Yet his volubility, his gaiety, and his chaff, were combined with a certain gentlemanlike tact and dexterity; and he made Raby laugh in spite of himself, and often made the ladies smile. But Henry Little sat opposite, and wondered at them all, and his sad heart became very bitter.

When they joined the ladies in the drawing-room, Henry made an effort to speak to Jael Dence. He was most anxious to know whether she

had heard from Grace Carden. But Jael did not meet him very promptly, and, while he was faltering out his inquiries, up came Richard Raby, and resumed his attentions to her: attentions that very soon took the form of downright love-making. In fact he stayed an hour after his carriage was announced, and, being a young man of great resolution, and accustomed to please himself, he fell over head and ears in love with Miss Dence; and showed it then and thereafter.

It did not disturb her composure. She had often been made love to, and could parry as well as Dick could fence.

She behaved with admirable good sense; treated it all as a polite jest, but not a disagreeable one.

Mrs. Little lost patience with them both. She drew Henry aside, and asked him why he allowed Mr. Richard Raby to monopolize her.

"How can I help it?" said Henry. "He is in love with her; and no wonder: see how beautiful she is, and her skin like white satin. She is ever so much bigger than I thought. But her heart is bigger than all. Who'd think she had ever condescended to grind saws with me?"

"Who indeed? And with those superb arms?"

"Why, that is it, mother; they are up to anything: it was one of those superb arms she flung round a blackguard's neck for me, and threw him like a sack; or I should not be here. Poor girl! Do you think that chatterbox would make her happy?"

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"Heaven forbid! He is not worthy of her. No man is worthy of her, except the one I mean her to have, and that is yourself."

"Me, mother! are you mad?"

"No: you are mad, if you reject her. Where can you hope to find her equal? In what does she fail? In face? why it is comeliness, goodness, and modesty, personified. In person? why she is the only perfect figure I ever saw. Such an arm, hand, foot, neck, and bust, I never saw, all in the same woman. Is it sense? why she is wise beyond her years, and beyond her sex. Think of her great self-denial: she always loved you, yet aided you, and advised you to get that mad young thing you preferred to her—men are so blind in choosing women. Then think of her saving your life: and then how nearly she lost her own, through her love for you. Oh, Henry, if you cling to a married woman, and still turn away from that angelic creature there, and disappoint your poor mother again, whose life has been one long disappointment, I shall begin to fear you were born without a heart."

3 Pupil of the Botel Rambouillet.

Marie-Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne was well known to her contemporaries under that designation. But the only title by which posterity will be likely to recognize her is that of the Countess de la Fayette, authoress of several novels, which had a considerable vogue in their day, and were written in a style, of which some declared Madame de la Fayette to be the originator, but which had merely been so long out of fashion as to seem brand-new when it came uppermost again on the "whirligig of Time." The same phenomenon has been witnessed before—and since.

The world to which Mademoiselle de la Vergne was well known was a very great world indeed. It was the world of balls, and fêtes, and carousels; of triumphal entries, and magnificent banquets; of brilliant ballets, comedies, and operas, wherein, if the august performers were a little gauche and untrained, yet the diamonds were real, and the gold lace bullion! In a word, it was the court-world of Paris, presided over by that be-periwigged Olympian Jupiter known to mortals as Louis le Grand, fourteenth of his name.

Marie-Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne was born in the year 1633. She was the daughter of Aymar de la Vergne, Governor of Havre-de-Grace, and Marie de Pena, of an ancient Provençal family, which had produced several men celebrated in science and letters. The subject of the present paper counted among her ancestors Hugues de Pena, a writer of tragedies highly esteemed in their day, who received the poet's laurel from the hands of Queen Beatrix, wife of Charles of France, King of Naples, and Jean de Pena, a mathematician of high reputation.

Mademoiselle de la Vergne lost her father when she was fifteen years of age. Not very long after Aymar de la Vergne's death,—that is to say, towards the end of the year 1650,—his widow married again. Her second husband was the Chevalier Renaud de Sevigné, a Knight of Malta, who caused himself to be absolved from his vows in order to contract this alliance. Thus, through her stepfather, Mademoiselle de la Vergne became connected with Madame de Sevigné; for Renaud de Sevigné was uncle to the writer of the famous letters, and the intimacy between these two distinguished women ripened into a life-long friendship.

If any credit may be given to a sort of newspaper in verse entitled La Muse Historique, which Loret published at the time, Mademoiselle de la Vergne was not too well satisfied with her mother's second marriage. The motive to which the Muse Historique attributes this feeling on the young lady's part is curiously characteristic of the period, and of the

place. It is, namely, the irritation of a jealous vanity at seeing her mother's charms preferred before her own !—

Ayant cru, pour être fort belle, Que la fête seroit pour elle; Que l'amour ne trempe ses dards Que dans ses aimables regards;

and so forth. But there was a much better reason why Mademoiselle de la Vergne should not have looked very favourably on her mother's marriage; and one which it is much safer to attribute to a lady who was famous throughout her life for sense, prudence, and—not to say it maliciously—a judicious regard for her worldly interests. And this reason may be found in the fact that in marrying the Chevalier de Sevigné, Madame de la Vergne settled upon him a life-interest in the whole of her property after her death. And only at the Chevalier's decease was it to revert to his stepdaughter. In fact, Madame de Sevigné, in a letter to her daughter announcing the death of the Chevalier de Sevigné, says: "Madame de la Fayette now begins to inherit her mother's property." This was in 1676.

Renaud de Sevigné was the relation and friend of the famous Cardinal de Retz, and one of his principal adherents and agents during the troubles of the Fronde. The Cardinal raised a regiment of cavalry (in 1649), and gave the command of it to his kinsman the Chevalier de Sevigné. The regiment went by the name of the Corinthians, for the reason that De Retz was titular archbishop of Corinth. The Chevalier being unfortunately beaten at the head of his regiment, the wits of the day, who were anything rather than reverent, called this defeat the "first to Corinthians." When De Retz was arrested after the return of the King to Paris, in October, 1652, De Sevigné retired to Anjou with his wife and stepdaughter. And two years later, when the Cardinal was removed to the castle of Nantes, the Chevalier took Mademoiselle de la Vergne to visit him there. We have De Retz's own account of the interview, narrated with the nonchalant candour of a man too thoroughly self-satisfied to be put out of countenance by the coldness of any dame or demoiselle living.

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"She was," says he, "very pretty and very amiable. She pleased me greatly; and, to say truth, I did not please her at all." He then proceeds to account for this surprising fact. "Whether it were that she had no inclination for me" (No inclination for your Eminence? A pleasant absurdity!) "or whether the suspicions diligently instilled into her, even from the old Paris days, by her mother and stepfather, and the accounts they had given her of my inconstancies, and my different love-affairs, had put her on her guard against me" (Much more probable! It may well be, indeed, that the poor girl was making a violent struggle to withstand your Eminence's dangerous fascination). "Howbeit, I consoled myself for her cruelty with the facility that was natural to me." (Doubtless! Like a gallant Gallic Cardinal "all of the olden time!")

This unintentional testimony to Mademoiselle de la Vergne's taste and

modesty can only be fully appreciated by those who, from a study of the memoirs of the time, have gained some idea what manner of man Jean-François de Gondi, the clever, ambitious, unscrupulous, intriguing Cardinal de Retz, really was; not merely as he figures on the shifting scene of politics, but in his private life, beyond the threshold of which it would be impossible in these pages to conduct the reader. Nevertheless, he exercised an extraordinary influence over most of those men and women with whom he came in contact, and Bossuet has said of him that it was impossible either to esteem, to fear, or to hate him by halves. And whatever bad taste Mademoiselle de la Vergne may have shown in remaining insensible to the Cardinal's personal fascinations, it is certain that she was his zealous political partisan, and that she remained a Frondeuse at heart to the end of her days.

To an early intimacy with Mademoiselle Catherine-Henriette d'Angennes, daughter of the Baron de la Loupe, who was connected with the family of the Marquis de Rambouillet, Maria de la Vergne owed an introduction to the Hôtel Rambouillet. Despite her youth she speedily attracted the special notice and favour of the "Grande Marquise"—by that name Madame de Rambouillet was known in those, her palmy days,—and, says

Segrais, "learned a great deal from her."

The two chief influences in her early life were thus, politically and socially, the Fronde; intellectually, the Hôtel Rambouillet. In a short notice of Madame de la Fayette prefixed to her Histoire de Madame Henriette, in the excellent and valuable Collection Petitot, the writer says, "We insist on these facts" (the facts, namely, of her having been brought up in her stepfather's house amid all sorts of intrigues directed against the royal authority, and of her early introduction to the Hôtel Rambouillet), "because we shall have to examine later, how far she was able to emancipate herself from the first impressions of her youth."

To us it appears pretty evident that these "first impressions of her youth" produced lasting effects on her mind and opinions. She had individuality enough to differ greatly from her teachers; but none the less did she profit by them. And, indeed, what can sane originality be except

a healthy mental digestion and assimilation?

Mademoiselle de la Vergne had the honour—it was an honour at that period—of having the epithet "Précieuse" applied to herself by Scarron, and doubtless by many others, in the days before Molière's play of the Précieuses Ridicules had brought the term into ridicule and disrepute. She was almost a marvel of learning for her times, and might well have been considered extremely "blue" even at present. Besides being well acquainted with her own language and with Italian, she was a very competent Latin scholar. The celebrated Ménage, and Rapin, undertook to teach her Latin. "After three months' lessons," says Segrais, "she knew more than her masters. In making her construe, the two savants had a dispute together respecting the meaning of a passage, and neither would yield to his adversary's opinion. Madame de la Fayette

said to them, 'You neither of you understand anything about the matter.'
And, in fact, she gave them the true explanation of the passage, and they at once agreed that she was right."

Think of that! Not only was she right, but she induced two savants to concur in saying so. Truly one might wish that the manner of her triumph (unless Segrais does her injustice in his account of the affair) had been more gracious. There is a little touch of hardness about it-a selfsatisfied inconsiderateness which does not altogether attract our sympathy. However, her instructors were charmed with her talents, and were never weary of making much of them by word and pen. Ménage, in particular, was so proud of his brilliant pupil's rapid progress that he addressed some laudatory Latin verses to her. They are to be found in a collection called the Poëmata, published in Paris in 1667 :- Ad Fontem Villa Jancurtiaca. Ad Mariam Magdalenam Lavernam. Amyntas anceps, &c. Unfortunately, he was thoughtless enough to translate the young lady's name (La Vergne) into Lavernula, or Laverna. As Laverna was the Roman goddess of thieves-their patron saint as it were-this slip on the part of Ménage caused it to be said that after all there was nothing surprising in the fact that the Prince of Plagiaries should have chosen for his divinity the goddess of thieves. The following epigram-not, it must be owned, of a very dazzling brilliancy-was made on the occasion :-

> Lesbia nulla tibi est, nulla est tibi dicta Corinna; Carmine laudatur Cynthia nulla tuo: Sed cum doctorum compiles scrinia vatum, Nil mirum si sit culta Laverna tibi.

In the year 1655, being then twenty-two years old, Mademoiselle de la Vergne was married to François Mottier, Comte de la Fayette, Seigneur de Nades, and lieutenant in the French Guard. He was, moreover, the brother of Louise de la Fayette, an ex-maid-of-honour to Anne of Austria, and an ex-mistress of Louis XIII. Cardinal Richelieu compelled her to retire to the convent of Sainte Marie de Chaillot, of which she became Superior, and where she died in the year 1665, just ten years after her brother's marriage with Mademoiselle de la Vergne. We shall have occasion to revert to the convent of Sainte Marie de Chaillot by-and-by.

The memoirs of the time give no details respecting the Count de la Fayette. He is known to have served in Holland; to have been ensign in the company of the Maréchal d'Albret; and to have subsequently become, as before mentioned, lieutenant in the French Guard. And that is nearly all that is known of him. There exists, however, in an ancient collection of songs, one made on the first interview that took place between the Count and Mademoiselle de la Vergne, who, albeit it was their first interview, are represented as being already betrothed. But that was no unusual circumstance. The song gives a ludicrous picture of the awkwardness and embarrassment of La Fayette, who withdraws without having uttered a syllable, and is immediately pounced on (in a figurative sense) and torn to pieces by the company—doubtless, a family-party assembled

to give judgment on the "futur." But they all agree in declaring that the bride elect is a singularly happy and fortunate woman in the prospect of having such an utter blockhead for a husband. The lady is a little less severe—as feeling the peculiar felicity of her position—and generously replies, when interrogated as to her opinion of her future spouse, that he seems very gentle, and has an uncommonly pleasant air, quoique peut-être bête, and that she considers him a most eligible match. The song concludes by declaring that the gentleman—

Ira à sa terre Comme monsieur son père;

and that his wife will make

Des romans à Paris Avec les beaux esprits.

As Madame de la Fayette did not publish her first novel until 1660 (five years after her marriage), these last lines betray that the song must have been written considerably later than the period it refers to, and is—so far as Madame de la Fayette is concerned—a prophecy after the fact. Notwithstanding these sneers at the poor Count de la Fayette's stupidity and his wife's conscious superiority to him, there is no reason to believe that they were other than an attached and contented couple. Madame de la Fayette was respected as a wife and mother. The precise date of her husband's death is not known; but the birth of her youngest son took place in 1659, and it is believed that the Count de la Fayette did not very long survive this date.

In the very year of her marriage began a friendship which has indissolubly united the names of two distinguished persons, Madame de la Fayette and the Duke de la Rochefoucauld. Their intimacy was as close and affectionate as that of brother and sister, and equally pure and innocent. To say that it was unassailed by slander would be almost to assert a miracle. Hamlet knew the world, or the court—and courtiers peopled Madame de la Fayette's world nearly all her life—when he bitterly assured Ophelia that she should not "'scape calumny;" and a life-long friendship between a man and a woman, which should be at once fond, familiar, and innocent, was almost inconceivable to many shining ornaments of that shining period, the age of Louis XIV. "Some persons affected," says Monsieur Petitot, "to raise doubts as to the nature of the sentiment which united them, although it seems to be proved that love really had nothing to do with it."

Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld was forty-two years old when he first knew Madame de la Fayette. He was then more renowned for his gallantries than for the exemplariness of his life. But the counsels of Madame de la Fayette worked a complete change in his manners. "He has improved my mind," she said, "but I have reformed his heart;" though, indeed, the heart had but a small share in the various intrigues of which he had been the hero. He acknowledged that he had never found love elsewhere than in romances; and that as to himself he had never felt anything of it!

Some biographers would fain have us believe that it was only after her friendship with La Rochefoucauld that Madame de la Fayette gave herself up to study, and endeavoured to store her mind with knowledge. But this may hardly be. We have seen that long before the date of her marriage Scarron speaks of her as "précieuse;" and this was a term by no means applied as a matter of course to every pretty young lady. They were all, doubtless, beautiful, graceful, charming, dazzling, or whatever fashionable slang epithet was in vogue. But they were not all "précieuses." The word implies culture above that which was necessary to balance one-self on high-heeled shoes, or to graduate one's curtsey through every nice shade from impertinence to servility.

It is doubtless true that the influence of La Rochefoucauld helped the intellect of Marie de la Fayette; indeed, we have her own testimony to that effect. But the influence was shown more in polishing and refining than in anything else. The diamond existed already; the lapidary's part was but to enable the world to perceive its value. Segrais, who was an intimate friend of both parties, says—apropos of Madame de la Fayette's remark that "La Rochefoucauld had improved her mind, but she had reformed his heart"—"He not only improved her mind, but her manner." He gave her "politesse." We remember the little episode of the disputed passage in Virgil, and are willing to acknowledge that a dose of suavity might be a pleasant improvement to the demeanour of the fair "Laverna."

The Countess de la Fayette was a singularly sincere woman. She loved the real and the genuine in all things; she was a sovereign enemy to "humbug." For that ancient Proteus was well known in the century of Louis le Grand, though by another-by many another-name. The Duc de la Rochefoucauld bestowed on his friend the distinguishing epithet of "vraie." She was true, under all circumstances. "Elle est vraie," said La Rochefoucauld; and the word seemed to paint her character so completely that from that time forth every one applied it to her, although it had never before been used in that acceptation. Madame de Sevigné loved and honoured her to the last. We can have no better proof of it than the terms in which Madame de la Fayette is spoken of in those confidential letters to her daughter wherein Madame de Sevigné lays bare without reserve every movement of her heart. She (De Sevigné) tells her daughter (Madame de Grignan), "Madame de la Fayette acknowledges that she must yield up the first place in my heart to you, as of right. This justice should avail to obtain for her the next place in my affections, which, in truth, she wholly merits."

In 1660, Madame de la Fayette published the Princesse de Montpensier. This little novel, which had a great success, appeared not very long after the first representation of Molière's Précieuses Ridicules. It made a revolution in one branch of French literature, that of fiction. Up to the period of its appearance, the novels in vogue had been those of La Calprenède, of

Mademoiselle de Scudéri, of Gomberville. They were read with avidity in court and city, and even-it is markedly stated by many memoirwriters of the time-at Port-Royal. These monstrous productions frequently consisted of from ten to twelve volumes, containing more than a thousand pages each. They were filled with the most improbable events, the most complicated intrigues, and the most prolix discussions on the tender passion, expressed in language so far-fetched and superrefined as to be occasionally unintelligible. Nevertheless, these extravagant compositions were read, and re-read, with the greatest delight by persons of intellect and education. Madame de Sevigné preserved a taste for them to the end of her days, and had the honesty to avow it. And from one of her letters we learn that Madame de la Fayette had also shared the general liking for the novels popular in her youth. Madame de Grignan belonged to a younger generation, whose day-dreams had not been fed by Cléopâtre or the Carte du Tendre. She, it seems by the context of the reply, had protested against the novels of La Calprenède, and her mother thus writes:-"There are examples both of the good and evil effects of this sort of reading. You do not like it: you have succeeded in life. I liked it, I have not run my career very badly. 'To the pure all things are pure,' as you say. As for me, who wished to justify my predilection, I found that a young man became generous and brave by studying my favourite heroes, and that a young girl grew virtuous and discreet in reading Cléopâtre. There may be some here and there who take things a little amiss. But they would do no better even if they did not know how to read! . . . The essential point is to have a well-constituted mind. One is not easily spoilt. Madame de la Fayette is still an example of this."

We see, therefore, that Madame de la Fayette had shared the partiality for these Brobdingnagian "fashionable novels." But, as the writer of the notice before alluded to shrewdly remarks, "when she wrote herself, she took good care not to imitate them." There was an interval of ten years between the publication of the Princesse de Montpensier and that of her next work, Zaïde, which appeared in 1670. After Zaïde, came the Princesse de Clèves. These two works, more considerable in extent than the Princesse de Montpensicr, entirely superseded and caused to be forgotten the romances which people had so greatly admired previously. Madame de la Fayette wrote in a sober and simple style, and relied for her effects on a close and delicate observation of nature. She eschewed, say her panegyrists, all extravagant and improbable adventures, and described the conversation of persons of polished education and distinguished rank, "who express with elegance ingenious thoughts and delicate sentiments." This scarcely sounds to us like "accurate painting of nature!" And it is difficult to believe that persons of polished education and distinguished rank habitually "talked like a book" under all manner of trying circumstances, even in the age of Louis XIV.! But, doubtless, as compared with Scudéri, La Fayette was nature and simplicity itself.

Fontenelle, Voltaire, D'Alembert, La Harpe, Marmontel, and many others concur in giving her high praise. D'Alembert dwells with particular admiration on the incident in Zaïde, where two lovers who do not understand each other's language are forced to part for some months, and during their separation employ their time in studying, so that when they meet again each addresses the other in a tongue strange to the speaker, but which is the native language of the speaker's well-beloved. "There is not, perhaps," says M. D'Alembert, "among the ancients, who are so highly vaunted above modern writers, any trait of so delicate a sentiment and so tender a regard." La Harpe and Marmontel prefer the Princesse de Clèves. This latter work caused a sort of paper war in its day. Valincour criticized it in a pamphlet entitled, Letters to Madame de ---, on the subject of the "Princess of Cleves." These letters were at first attributed to the Père Bouhours. The partisans of the work replied in another pamphlet, which appeared under the title of Critical Conversations on the "Princess of Clèves." (The controversy was chiefly excited by a passage in the book, where the princess avows to her husband that she loves another, but that she has earnestly invoked the aid of virtue and religion, and if she has not succeeded in stifling her reprehensible passion, she has at least had strength to triumph over it. M. Jay, who has also published a notice of Madame de la Fayette, observes that "the writers of that period did not conceive that a composition without a moral aim could be worthy of esteem;" and he adds, "That discovery was reserved for us."

Madame de Sevigné was at first completely charmed with the *Princesse de Clèves*, and wrote off, in the first heat of her enthusiasm, to her witty and worthless cousin, the Count de Bussy-Rabutin, pressing him to procure the book. But Rabutin, on whom what M. Jay calls "a moral aim" was not likely to have much effect, did not altogether share Madame de Sevigné's opinion. He criticizes the work at some length. The first part of it he finds admirable; the second pleases him less. He objects to the confession which the Princess of Clèves makes to her husband, pronouncing it to be extravagant. And he adds a few biting words after his manner, which yet, possibly, may have a spice of truth in them: "The author has thought more of being unlike other romances than of following good sense."

However, the testimony of the great majority of her contemporaries, and the almost unanimous approval of modern critics, have placed Madame de la Fayette's literary reputation on an unassailably firm basis. In the romance of Zaüde there are distinct traces of the influence of the Hôtel Rambouillet. M. Jay finds these traces in the elaborate discussions and recherché theories about love, which, he says, would have delighted the circles presided over by Julie d'Angennes and the Grande Marquise. Perhaps we should do no injustice in attributing also a little of the high morality, the purity of language, and the general elevation of style in Madame de la Fayette's writings, to the early inspiration of a society which, under Madame de Rambouillet's auspices, eschewed coarseness, vulgarity, and a low tone of sentiment; albeit they laid themselves open to some

ridicule in their devotion to all that was elevated and refined. Before quitting the subject of Madame de la Fayette's novels, it may be as well to state that the well-known man of letters, Segrais, to whom she was a firm friend, and who found an asylum in her house after he had been disgraced by "Mademoiselle," whose gentleman-in-waiting he was, gave the countess some assistance in her literary work. This assistance, however, consisted merely in hints as to the construction of her books and the disposition of the incidents. The invention and language were entirely her own, as

Segrais has explicitly acknowledged.

We have said that we should have occasion to revert to the convent of Sainte-Marie de Chaillot. It will be remembered that Louise de la Fayette, the countess's sister-in-law, was Superior of this religious establishment. In the course of her visits thither to see her sister-inlaw, Madame de la Fayette formed a very important acquaintance. The widowed queen of our Charles I. passed a great part of the year at the convent of Sainte-Marie de Chaillot. Her youngest daughter, the Princess Henrietta of England, as she was styled, conceived a great liking for Madame de la Fayette. When the young Princess was married, in 1661, to "Monsieur" (Philip, Duke of Orleans, brother of Louis XIV.), she accorded to her new friend the right of private entry to her at all times. There was a great difference of age between them; Henrietta being barely seventeen, and Madame de la Fayette eight-and-twenty. There was a still greater difference of character. The Princess was kind and amiable, but giddy and impulsive; whilst Madame de la Fayette was naturally grave, and, to quote Segrais, her judgment surpassed her wit. (This dictum, by the way, was extremely well received by the subject of it, who aspired rather to solidity than brilliancy of intellect.) Notwithstanding these differences, or perhaps because of them, the Princess and the Countess de la Fayette became fast friends. "Madame," as Henrietta was always called after her marriage, delighted in holding long conversations with her friend, in the course of which she related to her some of the most private anecdotes of the Court, and even some which concerned her (the Princess) personally. In the year 1664 the Count de Guiche, whose mad passion for the Princess Henrietta made a great noise at the Court, was exiled. We will proceed in Madame de la Fayette's own words :-

"One day when Madame was giving me an account of some very extraordinary circumstances relating to his (De Guiche's) passion for her, 'Do you not think,' said she, 'that if all this that has happened to me, and the matters pertaining to it, were written, it would make a pretty history? You write well,' she added. 'Write! I will furnish you with good materials.' I entered into the idea with pleasure, and we made the plan of our history just as the readers will find it in these pages."

The memoirs exist, and extend from the year 1659 to the year 1665. When they had reached this point the Princess must have ceased to furnish the materials for them, and Madame de la Fayette passes abruptly, without any transition, from 1665 to 1670, to recount the

premature and mysterious death of Madame, by whose side she remained until she had breathed her last. Madame de la Fayette speaks of the death of this unfortunate Princess with the accents of genuine grief. "I experienced an affliction as deep as can be felt in seeing her expire. She was the most amiable Princess who ever existed, and had honoured me with her favour. This is one of those losses for which we can never be entirely consoled, and which leave behind them a trace of bitterness throughout the remainder of our lives."

Of the Histoire de Madame Henriette d'Angleterre, and the glimpse it affords us into the interior of a royal household of those days, we have not space to speak at length. Albeit, there are matters in it which give rise to some curious speculations, and which, did time and place "adhere," might be worth examining. It may be noticed in passing that M. Auger, in his article on Madame de la Fayette in the Biographie Universelle, has fallen into the singular error of styling these memoirs un roman historique; which is the more strange, inasmuch as M. Auger is the author of a biographical notice of Madame de la Fayette which he has prefixed to an edition of her works, and must, therefore, one would suppose, have been well acquainted with all her writings. Certain it is, however, that the Histoire de Madame Henriette d'Angleterre resembles nothing less than an historical romance.

The Memoirs of Henriette were first published in 1720, and have frequently been reprinted. We have, moreover, from the pen of Madame de la Fayette, Memoirs of the Court of France during the Years 1688 and 1689. These are curious and interesting, although brief. There is a great difference observable between these memoirs and the history of Madame. In the latter, Madame de la Fayette permits herself no critical reflections; in the former she loses no opportunity of aiming a shaft of satire against Louis XIV. and his Ministers. The history of Madame is a plain, and sometimes dry statement of facts. But then it was written under the eyes, and almost at the dictation of the King's sister-in-law. In the Memoirs of the Court of France Madame de la Fayette is more at liberty, and confirms what we have stated, namely, that she was always a Frondeuse at heart.

She was, however, treated with great consideration by the Grand Monarque. He granted her a pension, and received her with distinguished favour whenever she went to Versailles. Madame de Sevigné expatiates in more than one of her letters on the royal graciousness and kindness to her dear friend. Madame de la Fayette had two sons. The elder followed the career of an ecclesiastic, became an abbé, and enjoyed several benefices. The second was a brigadier of infantry, and died in 1694 at the age of thirty-five. His mother, however, did not live to mourn his loss. She died in 1693 in her sixtieth year.

The latter years of Madame de la Fayette's life were very sad. She survived her friend, the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, thirteen years; but, in all that time, she never recovered from the sorrow of his loss. Madame

de Sevigné has painted her friend's grief with incomparable pathos and simplicity. "Where," she writes, "can Madame de la Fayette look for such friendship, such companionship, such sweetness, such agreeability, so much consideration and regard for her and for her son? She is infirm, she is always in her chamber, she never goes abroad. M. de la Rochefoucauld was sedentary like her. This rendered them necessary to one another. Nothing can be comparable to the confidence and the charm of their friendship. Think of it, my daughter. You will find that it is impossible to meet with a greater loss, or one for which time is less able to offer any consolation. Madame de la Fayette's weak constitution succumbs under this affliction. She has a fever, brought on by fretting." And again: "Time, which is so kind to others, augments, and will continue to augment, her sorrows."

She appears to have suffered prematurely from the bodily infirmities of old age. But her intellect remained clear; although there is a passage in one of Madame de Sevigné's letters which pierces one like a cry of despair, wherein she says that Madame de la Fayette is so overwhelmed by grief that she tries to stupefy her mind, and takes as much pains to

banish thoughts and ideas as others take to excite them.

Madame de la Fayette sought help and consolation from religion. To us it appears that such seeking came rather late, and that there can be little merit in offering to heaven a heart weary of earth. But, on such points, our best wisdom fails us. We know, at least, that Marie de la Fayette did not lay before her God the lees of a life stained with crime and self-indulgence, as was the case with many of her compeers. She chose for her confessor the Abbé Duguet of Port-Royal, and her latter days were passed in the practise of the most austere piety.

Such knowledge of her character as can be gleaned from her contemporaries-foes as well as friends-may be thus summed up:-She was a sincere, clear-minded, judicious woman. Her few attachments appear to have been deep and lasting, as is often the case with those whose affections are not easily aroused, nor lightly given. She was accused of hardness, and perhaps the accusation was not altogether unjust; but a universal amiability, an eider-down softness of demeanour, such as distinguished Madame de Sevigné, for example, was not compatible with her reputation for truth-telling. Such a reputation may be a crown, but it can hardly fail at times to be a crown of martyrdom! She was a woman of business; managing her own affairs and those of her sons with great prudence and energy. Neither is this trait one to conciliate liking. The world likes a woman to be helpless,—unless the world happens to need One feminine trait may be recorded,—one little womanly concession to public opinion which even the sincere Madame de la Fayette thought it no harm to make. Although she was an excellent Latin scholar, she took considerable pains to conceal her learning, "in order," says Segrais, "not to arouse the jealousy of the other ladies." Of course the gentlemen would not have thought of being jealous of her.

Prince Moleskine's Conspiracy.

A RUSSIAN SOCIALIST BUBBLE.

I.

And so it was announced in all the newspapers of Paris, that Prince Moleskine, having seen all that there was to see in the Capital of capitals, was about to return to his own country to accept a high post under Government.

The journal which first spread the tidings was the world-known and fashionable Gazette des Boulevards. Thence the news was copied into most of the London papers, one of which, in the letter of its Paris correspondent, added a few particulars which I may as well transcribe verbatim:—

Prince Moleskine, that elegant and accomplished cavalier, with whom more than one of my lady-readers has certainly danced at the Court Balls of the Tuileries, is one of the wealthiest landowners of the Muscovite Empire. We must go back in recollection to the mirificent era of the Grand Monarque to find in France anything approaching in splendour to the estate and château of Moleskine. I, who frequently dine with the Prince at his sumptuous mansion in the Avenue des Champs Elysées, can speak, from experience, of the exquisite urbanity of my noble host, of the delicate and recherché fare of his table, and of the never-ceasing flow of affability and wit, which makes the banquets of the Hôtel Moleskine recall the dazzling feasts of Alcibiades and Lucullus. But what pen can worthily describe the ancestral domain of the Moleskines, situated on the River Kama, in the Province of Tcheremiss, and extending so far in its fertile expanse of field and pasture, wood and hill, that it would need the swiftest horseman seven days to traverse it? Ah reader mine! let those who will rejoice over the Revolution of 1793 and gloat over the downfall of the fairest nobility in Europe, but suffer-yes, suffer-one whom party prejudice has never blinded, nor republican fallacies deceived, to give a short sigh of regret to those courtly times when chivalrons France-the France of Saint Denis, the lilies, the oriflamme, and the white banner-was not obliged to look abroad to behold baronial castles and princely manors. Up, shades of Robespierre and Marat! Up, rabble sans-culottes! and chuckle over your work! What are the riches of the wealthiest of your nobles, now-of, a Montmorency, of a Luynes, of a Larochefoucauld-as compared with the wealth of Prince Moleskine? Like that scion of the House of Esterhazy, who, in reply to the British nobleman who had boasted of having three thousand sheep, answered calmly: "And I, my lord, have three thousand shepherds," so likewise could Monsieur de Moleskine say to the wealthiest of France's degenerate nobles: "For every acre of land you possess, I own a village; for every cottage, a farm; for every farm, a palace !" Ah ! gentlemen of the nineteenth century ! Ah ! citizen-bourgeois! you have fallen upon fine times, when the state and luxury that were wont to find their homes on the banks of the Seine have taken refuge on the frozen shores of the Neva! No wonder the Boyard Moleskine should be impatient to return to his own land. No wonder he should yearn to be rid of our pinchbeck

civilization, with its cheap restaurants, cheap politicians, cheap coats, and cheap talents! He must feel himself stifling in this paltry, middling atmosphere of ours. Bon voyage, Prince! my respectful sympathics are with you; my best, most deferential wishes will follow you.

This effusion was much relished by the readers of the paper in question, who almost felt as if they knew the Boyard themselves upon hearing him alluded to so familiarly. It is not very certain, by-the-by, whether the versatile correspondent just quoted had really ever sat in person at Prince Moleskine's table; but, if he had not, it is of no great consequence. A writer whose occupations take him constantly into the Grand Monde is naturally too well bred to draw any distinction between the houses where he has actually dined and those where he would like to dine. His account of the Russian Prince was read by a countless number of good-natured folk, who imbibed it all as gospel truth, and fell to wondering naïvely whether the Prince's estate was as big as Yorkshire, or as big as Yorkshire and Lancashire both together. The women opined that it must be in size and beauty something like the Principality of Wales, and, though some of them marvelled that the high-toned journalist should call Paris a city of cheap restaurants, yet they thought it quite natural that a man who had such a prodigiously fine property as the Prince should find the French capital rather small, and should be in a hurry to get home again. Amongst those of the Paris public, however, who were not indebted for their acquaintance with Russia or with Prince Moleskine to imaginative "Own Correspondents," a quite different version prevailed as to the Prince's reasons for departing. It was pretty well known in the clubs and drawing-rooms which the Prince frequented, that he was in not the slightest haste to be off-nay, that, far from contemning our pinchbeck civilization with its cheap coats, cheap talents, &c., he had the highest opinion both of the civilization and of the coats, and would gladly have remained in Paris until the end of his days, but for the awkward fact that he had run through every rouble of his money, and could no longer afford to live in our atmosphere, paltry and middling though it might be.

As for the ancestral domain of the Moleskines situated on the River Kama, in the Province of Tcheremiss, and extending so wide that no horseman could cross it in seven days, the Prince himself was the first to laugh at it: "For," said he, ruefully, "it is true enough that it would take a horseman a week to ride through my estate, but the reason is, that there is not a road in the place, and that half the property is composed of quagmires. And as regards the farms and villages," added he more ruefully still, "I daresay something might be made of them in good hands, but up to the present I have never been able to persuade my tenants to pay their rents, so that I do not think I should be much the worse off without them."

"Then you mean to say you are entirely ruined, my poor Prince?" observed the young Count de Lamotte de Bœurre, examining his friend

compassionately through his eyeglass.

"Very nearly," answered the Prince, twirling a cigarette with melancholy composure. "Six years of Paris, London, Baden, and Homburg have run through all my stock of ready money. My agent writes to say he can't raise another kopeck, so that unless I manage to get a place out of Government, I must shut myself up on my estate, and eke out an existence on our national tstchi, or cabbage-soup."

"That won't last long!" interposed the joyous Marquis de l'Aumelette-Soufflée: "you will point out to your tenantry the reciprocal advantages of Quarter Day, and, when you have enlightened their understanding and eased their purses, come back to us here in better spirits and stouter

than ever."

"Mercury, the God of rent, hear you!" replied Prince Moleskine piously. "Though how to touch the understanding of a Russian peasant, now that our holy father the Czar has abolished the knout, I confess seems

to me a mystery."

The foregoing conversation was being held in a saloon of the Cafe Anglais preparatory to one of the five or six farewell suppers which Prince Moleskine intended giving to different batches of his friends before bidding adieu to France. He was not in a particularly festive mood-no Russian ever is when about to return to his native land—but he did the honours of his table with a becoming show of unconcern, and towards 2 A.M., when the product of Madame Clicquot's vines had been round some ten or eleven times, rallied sufficiently to take a hopeful view of his position. He had an uncle who was Cabinet Minister at St. Petersburg, a statesman of the old Russian school, strong upon protocols, and devoted to the interests of his family. He had never kept up much intimacy with this relative, whom, to tell the truth, he had always considered a bore; but he resolved that, on the next day, he would despatch him a few Mayence hams, a Strasburg pie or two, and a case of Château Lafite, These delicacies would be sure to soften the Minister's heart, and might enable him to discover some snug sinecure where his nephew would be spared the humiliation of eating cabbage-soup and the painful necessity of retrenchment. Pleased enough with himself for having imagined this plan, Prince Moleskine adjourned with his friends to the club of the Rue Royale to finish the night-or, rather, to begin the morning-with a little trente et quarante at five napoleons the stake. When he returned home, precisely as the big bell of Notre Dame tolled six o'clock, he was still in a sanguine vein. He had lost three thousand francs, but this was a trifle. He remembered some fine sinecures under the Russian Government, which were worth ten or twelve thousand roubles a year, and he felt, no doubt, that his uncle would have the good taste to put him in possession of one of them.

A few hours later, however, when Prince Moleskine had slept, dreamed, got up, and breakfasted, he found himself out of sorts and despondent again. The morning's post had brought him a budget of letters from friends who had seen announced his departure in the papers, and wrote, some

to condole with him and others to congratulate him on that high post under Government, which he was popularly supposed to have obtained. There were a good many tradesmen's bills, too, and these were not calculated to raise his spirits; for a man never sees so clearly how foolish a thing it is to ruin himself as when he contemplates the memoranda of his purveyors, and asks himself how much real enjoyment he has had for his money. As the Prince desired that his exit from Paris should be as dignified as possible-in other words, as he had no wish to go off clandestinely with the reputation of being beggared, he had appointed a fixed date for settling his debts and leaving France; and, upon consulting his almanack, he now perceived that he had only six days left him. He took up a packet of visiting-cards and sat down to write in the corner of each of them, very moodily and reluctantly, the letters P. P. C. It is incredible how sorrowfully a Russian traces these letters when he is anywhere west of the Danube. And yet in Russia, as elsewhere, small boys are taught tho virtue of patriotism; and Prince Moleskine, when at school, had been made to write from copy-book texts: "Moscovia is the pearl of nations. Our Czar is the Father of his people."

Towards four o'clock, having dressed himself and filled his card-case, Prince Moleskine put a cigar into his mouth and went out on foot to take a turn down the Boulevards. The air of the Boulevards is the quintessence of that Parisian atmosphere which Russians so love, and which poor Prince Moleskine had but a week more to breathe. Besides, on this occasion he had a particular object in selecting this walk. He possessed a good many literary and artistic acquaintances whom he wished to invite to his farewell suppers; and the Boulevards are a place where every Parisian who holds a pen or a pencil may be seen on business or other-

wise between four and six.

As the Prince debouched on to the Boulevard des Italiens, the pavements and cafés were teeming with bustle. It was just the hour when the evening papers come out, and when editors and journalists, delighted to have got their work over, desert the dozens of offices in the Rue du Croissant and the Rue Montmartre, and spread in thirsty hordes along the whole line of thoroughfare between the Théâtre des Variétés and the Grand Hôtel. It should be mentioned, by the way, that a wonderful amount of good-fellowship exists between French journalists, notwithstanding the spirit with which they abuse each other from the columns of their respective papers. The fact that the Feuille de Chou is at daggers drawn with the Feuille de Radis, does not prevent the writers of those interesting prints from fraternizing very amicably when they have wiped their pens. They sit cheek by jowl in the same cafes; and though the Feuille de Chou has frequently accused the Feuille de Radis of being supported out of the secret-service funds, and though the Feuille de Radis has retorted the accusation with bitter irony, yet the combatants seem to think none the worse of one another, and will often take their absinthe peacefully and like good Christians at the same table.

Prince Moleskine had not walked far when he ran almost into the arms of a small, dapper man, who was scurrying along at a racing speed with a glass in his left eye, and a large bundle of papers under his arm.

"I beg your pardon," said the latter rather testily, in the tone of one whose meaning is "Confound you!" and he was about to start off again when, catching sight of the Prince's face, his own features cleared, and he exclaimed, holding out his hand:—"Oh, it's you, Prince. How do you do? You see before you one of the most unlucky men in Christendom."

"Unlucky, my dear Monsieur Roquet!" answered the Prince, laughing. "I can hardly believe that; I always see you so cheerful. What's the matter?"

"Ah! yes, unlucky and indignant too," continued the little man, beginning to gesticulate. "Look here!" and he drew from amidst his papers a long proof-slip covered with corrections. "I declare it's infamous," he cried, "infamous and disgusting. There's no living in such a country as this any longer. But, stay, we shall be able to talk better in a cafe. Come along: here are two seats vacant."

And, without further ceremony, the little M. Roquet, who appeared very friendly with Prince Moleskine, pushed him towards one of the tables outside the Café Riche, and shouted to a waiter to bring two glasses of absinthe.

"We can talk at our ease here," he proceeded, laying down his papers, and gabbling so fast that his words appeared to jostle and run over each other in issuing from his mouth. "I've told you already it's infamous and disgusting, and I repeat it. This is not a civilized country; we're worse off than you, Prince; Siberia's nothing to it. Ah! the brigands, with their press laws, and fines and imprisonments, and judges sold by the pack! Thought is fettered, sir, our tongues are padlocked, our pens loaded with chain-shot! You don't believe it? You smile! Look at this, then, and see. I've never written a better article than this in my whole life. It's brilliant, caustic, witty. Oh, yes, witty: for I know my merits, and I'm not ashamed to own them. It's the wittiest thing that's been printed for this many a day; for, betwixt you and me, there's not a man in France that can hold a candle to me in irony; and yet you perceive how the simpletons have hacked it about! And who do you imagine it is who has done this? Who, should you think, has been Yandal enough to run his pen through such passages as this, and this one again, and that one there? The Censorship? Not a bit of it; there is no censorship for papers. The editor? No, for I am the editor. Who then? Why, the proprietor, Prince, my own partner, my friend-hang him! Yes, you stare! No wonder, so did I. Isn't it enough to make one go mad and tear one's hair, and howl and emigrate to the end of the earth, and found a newspaper amongst the crabs and tadpoles?"

The little man stopped to take breath; gulped down a large draught

of absinthe; and then started off again like an express train; his two eyes gleaming with the brightness of a couple of lanterns, and his voice

growing shrill and sharp as an engine-whistle.

"But all this is just my luck, Prince. Fortune has played tricks with me ever since I was fool enough to buy an ink-pot, a pen, and a ream of paper. Never yet have I met with an editor whom I could convert to my views. Every one of them, without exception, has grown scared, shied, and finally thrown me over. The first I wrote under was poor Griffon-he's dead now, and I'm sorry for it, for I bear no malice. Before I had been a fortnight on his paper, I got him six months' imprisonment, and the printer two. They ought both to have been uncommonly grateful, for it established the success of their business, and made the paper sell like bread in famine time. But they weren't. When Griffon was sentenced, he said: 'If it was you who had the imprisonment, Roquet, I should see no objection; but you've got off with six days; and what with fine expenses, and fees for defence, this affair has cost the paper 20,000 francs. Try and see if you can't tone down a little.' Of course I made an effort to do what he called 'tone down,' but I couldn't manage it. He used to shred my articles into ribbons. 'That'll never do,' said I. 'I'm a Republican, and must speak plain.' 'So am I a Republican,' answered Griffon; 'but that's no reason why I should ram my head against a stone wall. Our press laws are too hard for us, man; you must keep clear of them. It's a suicidal plan to tilt headlong against them as you're doing.' Well, the upshot of it was, that Griffon and I parted, and I went over to a new paper that had just been founded. I remained there exactly six weeks, and then an article of mine got the paper suppressed. The proprietor and editor cursed as I've never heard men curse before or since; so that I got disgusted and sent them both a challenge. We fought with pistols. I winged the proprietor, but got winged by the editor, and we had a month's imprisonment all round for fighting. I don't believe they were true Republicans, though; I suspect they were subsidized by the police. The editor used to cut the most telling hits out of my papers, and the article that sent us into court would never have crept in at all, had he not been absent the day it appeared. After this, I went about from paper to paper, but it was everywhere the same. My style was too sharp for them. Egad! I was not the man to mince matters. If Government had a sore place anywhere, I laid my finger on it at once, and made them shriek. The Ministers hated me like pitch. They tried to buy me. They had a special and particular spy to dog me about. Ah! you don't know what are the persecutions that a man of genius has to suffer in spreading the holy light of truth! But dear Republic!" (here the little M. Roquet uncovered himself.) "I bore it all for thy sake. Yes; one of these days when thou hast broken the sceptre of the usurper in thy strong fair hands; when thou hast shattered the throne into faggots to make fire for the poor; when the palace of the tyrant has become an asylum for the homeless

sick, and the drum of the prætorian no longer beats in our streets to remind us of our slavery; then—yes, then, thou wilt remember how thy devoted child endured affliction for thee, how he loved thee, how he proclaimed thee, even in the face of the myrmidons of oppression, to be ever sacred, beautiful, and peerless!"

M. Roquet delivered this apostrophe with the same volubility as if he had learned it all out of a book. A stranger hearing him for the first time might have fancied the honest little man's absinthe was too strong for him; but the Prince, who appeared to know him well, listened with quiet

attention, and made no effort to interrupt him.

"And now," went on M. Roquet, taking a new gulp out of his glass, and catching up his mangled proof again-" And now you want to know what this is. Look at these erasures, Prince; look here, and look there, and tell me whether you don't think, upon your honour and conscience, that a man who could have marked out such passages must be sold to the police. The man who did it is Potiron, my partner; for I scorn now to call him my friend. Six months ago, seeing that the Government and all the editors together were in league against me, I went to Potiron, who was once a grocer, and has money, and proposed that we should found a paper together. He was to find the funds and I the talent. Said I, 'You'll be aiding in a glorious work, and you'll have tickets for all the theatres gratis; my name will soon raise the circulation to fifty thousand, and we'll share the profits.' Nothing could be fairer, and Potiron accepted. La Carmagnole came out, price three sous, and with me as editor. The first week we sold ten thousand, the next week twenty, the third week Potiron and I were in prison; but I edited the paper all the same at Sainte Pélagie, and the circulation went on rising and rising until we had reached fifty thousand, and the Government was half crazy. Well, would you believe it, Potiron was no sooner out of prison than he declared he had had enough of it? It is true we had had forty thousand francs' worth of fines laid upon us in instalments; but what of that? weren't we suffering for the good cause? I put it in this light to Potiron, and appealed to his manliness. But he said, 'Damn the good cause! if it goes on in this way I shall be ruined.' And this morning, when I came down to the office, what should I see but a barrister, whom the poltroon had hired to revise my writings and see that there was nothing actionable in them? You observe what a fine hash the two between them have made of my article; there's not a sentence they've left untouched. By heaven! they've 'pared down my ideas until there's not so much as the rind remaining of them. But this was too much. I lost patience. I told Potiron to his face that I had found him out; that he was in the pay of the Rue de Jérusalem; and that he was playing into the hands of despotism. I threw down my keys-for I can no longer associate with venal individuals whom I despise—and here I am."

"And what are you going to do now?" asked the Prince.

[&]quot;To-morrow morning, at six o'clock, I am going to fight Potiron in

the Bois de Vincennes, with foils," answered M. Roquet, simply. "After that I think I shall go abroad for a year or two, and travel. France is not a country where a man of large views, like me, can live. The eternal truths of liberalism are trampled down on our shores. Genius writes its leading articles with a sergent-de-ville on its right hand and a gendarme on its left. I am sick of it; I must have change of scene. I must try and forget that my country has given birth to such men as Potiron."

"What do you say to coming with me to Russia?" asked Prince

Moleskine, smiling.

"Ah!" exclaimed the little journalist, looking up enthusiastically, "that's an idea! Russia is a virgin soil—at least, virgin for such a purpose as mine. The seeds of liberty have never been scattered there; the whole intellect of the nation lies fallow. I might found a paper, title, The Harbinger—harbinger of truth, you know; price ten kopecks, published weekly in French, with cheap edition in Russian for the native workmen. You provide the funds and I furnish the talent."

"But," expostulated the Prince, who had not expected to be taken at his word, and was as much astonished as amused at the small man's earnestness—"But, my dear Monsieur Roquet, you will find gendarmes and police spies as plentiful in my country as here, and even more so:

our press laws, too, are much less pleasant than yours."

"Ah, yes, but there will be the glory of apostleship. Do you count for nothing the triumphs of John Huss, of Savonarola, of Luther? the pride of being the first to spread light among a benighted people! I shall send my name down to posterity in the annals of your national history, Prince; and I shall write a book in three volumes on the social condition of Russia, octavo size, bound in red, price five francs, six editions in the first month."

He had already drawn a pencil from his pocket and was rapidly making an inventory of the things he was likely to want for his journey. M. Roquet was one of those men whose brains appear to be perpetually simmering like the kettles of Cornish housewifes. He bounced about with the restless activity of a fly in a drum. As soon as he had a scheme in his mind-and he had about twenty a day-he was for putting it into execution at once, and it cost him no more hesitation to set off for Russia at a week's notice than it would have done to go on a pleasuretrip to St. Cloud or Asnières. There was no question about his being a man of talent; but his talent was of that peculiar sort which is always getting its possessor into trouble. All government would be impossible if there were many such good-natured, wayward, feather-brained subjects as he. Opposition to constituted authority was with him a creed, as well as an instinct. Had France been governed by a Royalty he would have been an Imperialist; as it happened to be ruled by an Emperor, he was a Republican. Very conscientious withal, he had fought half-a-dozen duels with brother journalists who had taunted him with having no settled convictions, and he would have fought half-a-dozen more had anybody ventured to insinuate that he was bigotedly devoted to any particular party. Everybody in Paris knew him, and most people liked him, for he was generous with his money, wrote very drolly, and praised himself with so much naïveness that it was impossible to suspect his good faith. In his private conviction he esteemed himself not only the first journalist in France but the first in Europe; and the Government had done not a little to foster this opinion in his mind by the foolish way in which they had persecuted him. It was, perhaps, a failing in M. Roquet that he looked upon all who were not of his way of thinking as police spies; but we are none of us perfect. Taken all in all, he was a pleasant-tempered, obstinate, kind-hearted fellow, and the fact that he always took the part of oppressed factions was proof enough that, whatever may have been his other defects, truckling to people in power was not one of them.

The Prince had frequently met him out, and thought him amusing and quaint; but the idea of taking a journey across Europe in the company of such a man was not one he seriously entertained, and he began to grow somewhat alarmed on observing how firmly the notion had seized hold of his excited friend's imagination. He tried to throw out a few hints as to the uncivilized character of the Russian police and the utter want of ceremony displayed by the Czar's Government in its relations with subversive prints; but this in nowise damped the little man's ardour. "Oh," said he, with a wave of the hand, "forewarned is forearmed. I know I shall be persecuted: so was Alexander Herzen, who founded the Kolokol, but after all what do I care? They won't suppress me at once; and before I am compelled to hold my tongue I shall have made my name as famous among your poor moujiks as it is among our own unfortunate, down-trodden proletaries."

(Proletary, by the way, was the word M. Roquet invariably employed in alluding to the working-classes. His readers of the Faubourg St. Antoine and the Quartier Mouffetard felt rather flattered by it. They fancied it was a synonym for "injured innocents," and it is not very certain M. Roquet did not think so too; he found little time to consult dictionaries.)

"But I have an uncle who is a Minister," ejaculated the Prince, looking rather blank, "and I am afraid he would not thank me, Monsieur Roquet, if he knew I was connected with an opposition paper."

"I am glad you've an uncle who is a Minister," rejoined the journalist, complacently; "for that will save us from fleabite vexations. Open persecution I don't mind, but petty annoyances, such as the police heap upon one here, always puts me out of temper. It's well to have a friend in a high place; he acts as lightning conductor. As to your uncle not liking the opposition, that, of course, is prejudice; we'll write him out of it, we'll convert him to our side. By the way, where do you live?"

"In the most desolate spot of all Russia," groaned Prince Moleskine, hoping to disenchant his tenacious friend. "I am two hundred and fifty leagues from a railway-station. The postman only comes near us once

every ten days. There's not a man who can speak French within a week's journey of me."

"That's capital," exclaimed little M. Roquet, rubbing his hands. "To be sure, I should have been glad to publish The Harbinger at St. Petersburg, but I shall learn more of Russian life by being right in the centre of a peasant district. Besides, if we are so far away from a railway station, I shall be able to bring out a dozen numbers or so of the paper before the Government hears anything about it. I suppose there's a printing-press in one or other of the country towns near you? I'll write the paper and you shall translate it into Russian. A dozen numbers will be enough to revolutionize the whole district. Egad! we'll have a rising like those of Stenko-Razin and Pougatcheff. The other provinces will take fire. There will be some fighting, castle-burning, a general insurrection of the peasantry; the Government will be frightened into giving reform, and perhaps a constitution, and you and I shall both have a statue. Waiter! two more glasses of absinthe."

"You go and be hanged," Prince Moleskine felt tempted to say, but he refrained himself, and remarked grimly, "I see you are bent on it, my dear Monsieur Roquet; but I warn you it's a dreary hole, and the cookery is detestable; we shall have nothing to eat but cabbage-soup."

"Prince," rejoined the small journalist, drawing himself up to his full height and laying his hand on his heart, "I am the son of my own works. My father sold shoestrings at a street-corner, and many's the time when I've gone to bed without so much as a crust of bread under my waistcoat. Do you think the fact of being obliged to eat cabbage-soup would deter me from undertaking the regeneration of a country? The Spartans lived on rancid broth and black bread, and yet Sparta begat Lycurgus and Leonidas."

"But I'm not of your opinion in politics," protested Prince Moleskine,

getting desperate; "I'm not a republican."

"No, I don't suppose you are," rejoined M. Roquet, indulgently, "for I don't suspect you've any political opinions at all as yet. You're a Prince, you're not thirty years old, and you've been amusing yourself all your life; what can you possibly know of politics? But I'll instruct you. I'll prove you that my doctrines are the only ones compatible with common sense, and you'll soon fall in with my views, for I observe you've a fair amount of intelligence."

After this flattering prediction there was nothing for it but to give in. Prince Moleskine shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"Well, I start on Thursday next," he said.

"I shall be ready," answered the journalist. "Here's the list of

things I shall want; I am going to order them to-night."

"You seem to make very light of your duel with M. Potiron," observed the Prince, good-humouredly, as he rose to go. "Mind he doesn't run his foil through your plans!"

"No danger," answered M. Roquet. "He can't fence; we shan't

hurt each other. By the way, I've not sent him my seconds yet: will you be one? And yet no," he added, quickly: "you're a nobleman—it wouldn't do. If my poor proletaries were to hear that I asked a Prince to second me, they'd fancy I had turned my coat."

"But what will they say, then, when they learn that you have gone to Russia with me?"

"Oh, in your country it doesn't matter. East of the Vistula every gentleman is a prince. Besides, who knows? we may convert Russia into a republic. Masaniello turned Naples upside down, and he was less of a man than I am."

Upon this the small journalist shook hands confidentially with the Boyard, and hurried away in the direction of the Rue Montmartre to hunt up two seconds, whilst Prince Moleskine, considerably astonished at the results of his afternoon's walk, strolled off to Chevet's to order some Mayence hams and some Strasburg pies for his uncle the Minister.

II.

A fortnight later the two fellow-travellers were at St. Petersburg. We have not wasted time by describing the farewell entertainments which the Prince gave his friends, nor the exemplary manner in which he paid all his bills, nor the regrets with which his tradesmen saw him depart, nor the graphic style in which the fashionable reporters descanted on his splendid estate in the province of Tcheremiss, and the yet more splendid post which the Government of his country had begged him to accept. We have not dwelt, either, on the duel, in which M. Jean-Jacques Roquet wounded M. Théophile Potiron in the fleshy part of the leg, and was himself transfixed by that gentleman through the fleshy part of the right arm. All these events were duly chronicled by the Gazettes, most of which furthermore stated that M. Jean-Jacques Roquet had accompanied Prince Moleskine to Russia to enjoy the pastime of bear-hunting, a sport in which he was known to be proficient. Our friend, the Paris correspondent, wrote to his paper as follows:—

I see that some of your contemporaries edit an absurd rumour that the Russian Boyard Moleskine has been ruined, and is leaving Paris for economical reasons. You may deny this on my authority; there is not a word of truth in it. I was dining with the Prince last night, and he assured me that his crops had been excellent and that sales of his short-horns (the Prince is a great cattle-breeder) were better this year than they had ever been before. He also gave me some valuable information as to the policy of Russia in the Himalaya question, which I reserve for another letter. The Prince was very pressing in his invitation to me to come and take a month's bear-shooting with him, but, of course, I was obliged to decline this. I am expected at the palace of Compiègne next week, and could not for the world disappoint my august Host and Hostess. You may insert confidently that the post to which Prince Moleskine has been appointed is that of High Archi-Chamberlain to H.I.H. the Grand Duchess Basilika-Petrowna; I have it from the Prince's own lips. Prince-Moleskine is accompanied to Russia by a brilliant and distinguished circle of friends who are going to enjoy his hospitality. Amongst them, I quote from memory, the Duke de G-, the Duke de H-, the witty Count de X-, and my friend the celebrated journalist Jean-Jacques Roquet, who has promised me a bear-skin.

Whilst these veracious particulars were being set up in print, Prince Moleskine and his companion were being whirled across the Continent, dreaming very little of bear-shooting. The enterprising M. Roquet had set out on his journey with his arm in a sling, and with an imposing quantity of luggage. When once the train had started, he informed his friend that one of his boxes was full of works on political economy, and that another contained a small portable printing-machine, bought in case there should be any difficulty in finding a printer for The Harbinger. This said, he lost no time in beginning the political education of the Prince, and treated him to vivid running commentaries on the manners, customs, institutions, and future prospects of the different peoples through whose countries they were passing. He was not effectually silenced until the Polish frontier, where the custom-house officers, notwithstanding his indignant protests, confiscated his printing-machine, his box of works on political economy, a number of the Revue des Deux Mondes, which he carried in his hand for desultory reading, the manuscript of a novel of his three parts finished, and a copy of the Journal des Débats, discovered by one of the officials in the tail-pocket of his coat. As he made a good deal of noise at first, and talked of liberty, the rights of man, and other odd things, a functionary took down his name in a note-book, and telegraphed it to St. Petersburg; so that poor M. Roquet, who had been exceedingly glum during the last four-and-twenty hours of his journey, found a gentleman in a braided cap on the look-out for him when he reached the capital, and was followed to his hotel by this attentive person, who was good enough to dog him wherever he went for the first few days after his arrival. As ill-luck would have it, the two travellers alighted in St. Petersburg on a day when there was a grand review of troops. The hotel where they put up was the best in the Newski Prospect; and M. Jean-Jacques Roquet, as he looked out of his window, beheld the entire length of that enormous thoroughfare, as well as the whole of the immense square of St. Isaac, filled with compact masses of soldiery marching in full uniform, and with a stiffness which only Russian warriors have, to the Imperial Park, where the reviews take place. There might have been fifty thousand soldiers or more, and very tough they looked. "Dear me!" muttered M. Roquet, "that's an amazing number of men, isn't it?" "Oh, that's nothing," answered Prince Moleskine, significantly. "It's not half the garrison of St. Petersburg." And upon this M. Roquet could not help thinking that he had perhaps made an unfortunate choice in selecting Russia as the birthplace of his Harbinger.

By way of acquainting himself with the periodical literature of the country he asked for a native paper, and a waiter in red plush breeches and a laced coat brought him up on a silver tray the St. Petersburg Gazette, in the chief column of which he read this:—

The day before yesterday His Imperial Majesty the Czar deigned to go out shooting in the woods of Czarskoe-Selo, and met with an accident, the branch of a

tree falling on his august head and prostrating him to the earth. Dr. Oiloff, the court physician, was at once on the spot, and his Majesty was graciously pleased to allow his head to be rubbed with an embrocation, after which he deigned to feel better, and by the end of the day was graciously pleased to feel no more pain at all.

Whilst the French journalist was occupied, very much to his stupefaction, in conning over this and other like paragraphs, Prince Moleskine was getting ready for a visit to his uncle. Out of courtesy he had sent to the Minister's mansion immediately on his arrival to beg the favour of an audience, and had received the verbal reply, that he might come when he pleased. This seemed to him kind, for it does not take much to set a man hoping: and he started out rather cheerfully, attired in a dress-coat, white gloves, and a white cravat, as if he were going to the opera. The broad, empty wind-swept streets of St. Petersburg had, however, an unconscionably bleak look to him as he rolled through them in the rumbling landau of his hotel. He mentally compared the shabby crazy droshkis plying for hire down the roadway, the dirty, howling, bearded isvostshicks, the small greasy tea-shops, and the dumpy, hard-featured Russian tradeswomen, with the smart cabs, coachmen, cafes, and shopkeepers of the pleasant city he had just left, and he prayed from the depths of his heart that his powerful relative might have some lucrative post to dispose of which would enable him-Prince Moleskine-to live six or seven months a year out of his native land-pearl of nations though it was. At his uncle's mansion, in front of which were two mounted sentries armed to the teeth, Prince Moleskine was kept an hour and a half in an anteroom: after that twenty minutes in a corridor; and it was not until he had seen some two score petitioners of various degree defile before him that his own turn came. An usher with a gold chain round his neck led him silently down a long succession of passages, and showed him into a large, warmly carpeted room, where a thin man with gold spectacles and a face wrinkled like a baked apple, was writing letters at a table, and looking uncommonly sour and sulky.

Prince Moleskine had not seen his uncle, Prince Shepskine, for seven or eight years, and was a few seconds recognizing the unaffectionate individual who did not so much as hold out a hand to him, but addressed him abruptly in a snappish tone without even looking up from his papers.

"So you've come back to Russia, have you, Paul-Petrowich," and you've run through your last rouble of course, else I shouldn't see you here? I bet a thousand ounces of gold to a brass kopeck that you've called to ask me for a place!"

This was as unsatisfactory a commencement as could have been imagined. Prince Moleskine had expected something quite different. He stammered, blushed red, and looked foolish.

^{*} Paul Petrowich means "Paul, son of Peter." Russians always address each other in this way, that is, by adding the name of a person's father to his, or her, own Christian name. In speaking to a woman, one would say, "Paulina-Petrowna," i.e. "Pauline, daughter of Peter."

"Don't try and tell a lie," pursued the statesman, taking a pinch of snuff. "Lies are in excessively bad taste, especially when they are useless. When I saw your Strasburg pies last week, I said Paul Petrowich will follow soon after, and sure enough here you are. Now, what is it you want me to do?"

Paul Petrowich, who had not been prepared for such a summary method of conducting the conversation, found nothing to answer, and gazed fixedly at his own hat.

The Minister eyed him with apparent curiosity for a moment or two, then took out a roll of parchment from a drawer in his table, and pushed

it towards his nephew:

"There," said he: "I knew you'd be here soon, so I made out your appointment on the day the pies came. You will be good enough to start to-morrow, and alone, please, for you've brought a jackanapes of a Frenchman with you, who had better go back to his country without loss of time. Your place is a very good one: Deputy-governor of Leghis, in the Caucasus. The salary is not large, but the emoluments are worth five or six times the actual pay; and if you're clever,—which I don't believe you are, by the way, else you'd have married a girl with money, and not come back begging places of Government;—if you're clever, I say, you ought to build up your fortune again in a few years' time, and then we'll make a Governor of you."

"The Caucasus!" exclaimed Prince Moleskine, who had turned pale at the dreaded name and was staring blankly at the parchment. "But you really can't be in earnest, sir; it's as bad as sending me to Siberia!"

"Do you mean to say you refuse?" asked the Minister, in a tone of

anger and surprise.

"I can never go to the Caucasus," said the young man doggedly;
"your excellency knows you would never have gone there yourself, had you been in my place, and I in yours. What is the use of being born in the nineteenth century if one is to eke out one's days amongst a herd of cut-throat barbarians? Frankly, sir, I should not have troubled you if I had foreseen such an offer as this."

"Confound you, you forget to whom you're speaking!" shouted the

little apple-faced statesman with indignation.

"No, I know I am speaking to my uncle," answered Prince Moleskine naïvely, "though I confess you have shown little feeling of kinship for me in this circumstance. All our other relatives have been enriched by you. It would have cost you nothing to give me a good place. It isn't out of your purse that the salaries are paid." The poor fellow's disappointment was so keen that he was uttering his thoughts with a frankness upon which he would never have ventured had he taken time to reflect what a very sorry helpmate is plain speaking.

"Hark you, my nephew," said the Minister, throwing a furious glance at the young man, "I advise you to keep a look-out over that tongue of yours, otherwise will be getting you into trouble. What have

you ever done for me, I should like to know, that I should take you in hand, and enrich you? I am not speaking here of affection, for affection is a commodity which we Ministers learn to dispense with. But you might have been of use to me. A man with the fortune and position which you had, can always make himself serviceable, even when he throws his money out of the window. You have been six years in Paris and have been spending at the rate of a million francs a year. What have you to show for your money? Have you a single friendship that can help either of us, have you acquired a grain of influence in diplomatic circles, have you taken a lead in French society and made yourself a name, have you secured any allies for me in the Paris press? God knows you could have coaxed half the journalists of the capital over to our side had you chosen to try! But no, you have made a fool of yourself, and that is all. I have watched you narrowly; you have never laid out a sou that can bring you in any interest. You have stupidly frittered away every kopeck of a fortune that could have made you one of the most popular gentlemen of Europe had you invested it adroitly. Your habitual associates have been simpletons; you have never courted the society of respectable women, so that there is not a drawing-room in Paris where you can be said to have any footing. If I send you back to France as secretary of legation, or to one of the small courts of Germany as envoy, we should both of us be laughed at, for you enjoy the reputation of being a noodle. Here is this Himalaya question in which we are involved. Is there a single newspaper in Paris that would publish a leading article for you, taking our view of the case? No, the whole Paris press is dead against us; the only intimate acquaintance you seem to have amongst journalists is this crack-brained M. Roquet, who has so high an opinion of your intelligence that he hopes to make a red republican of you after a few weeks' intercourse."

"And what if he does? I don't think I have much inducement to be an Imperialist," muttered Prince Moleskine, bitterly, though he marvelled that his uncle should be so well informed as to the designs of the Frenchman. "Before this Emperor of ours emancipated the serfs, my estate was one of the most flourishing in the country. Now half my fields lie fallow; my tenants are emigrating to the south. The agent writes to say that he can get nobody to work, and not a kopeck of rent. I ought to be in the receipt of half a million roubles a year, and I am a beggar."

"Do you think any of us liked the emancipation of the serfs?" hissed the Minister, rising and speaking close to his nephew's ear. "I, too, should have been beggared if I had not been where I am. But the thing is done now, and neither you nor I can undo it. Don't be a fool, Paul Petrowich; take this place I offer you. There's many a man better off than you are would go down on both knees to have it. In a few years, I tell you, it will make you rich, and then we can see and give you something better."

"I won't go to the Caucasus," replied Prince Moleskine, out of temper and unreasonable from his disappointment. "I'd rather go and

live on my estate, hole as that is."

"Then go to your estate," said the Minister, in a rage. "Only, I will tell you what, my uephew. So long as you were cutting your capers in Paris you didn't hurt me. Here it is different. I've as many enemies as white hairs on my head; and if you were to play any tricks in this country, or talk liberal trash within earshot of anybody, some of the responsibility would be sure to fall upon your relatives, myself amongst the number. Now you've ruined yourself, but I'm determined you shan't ruin me. You can go back to your estate; but I shall have a sharp watch kept over your actions and speeches; and as for that M. Roquet, he shall be conducted back to the frontier this very day. He can mean no good by coming here, and we've enough Radicals of our own without being in need of foreign importations. That's all I've got to say. Good-morning."

"You can do your worst," said the Prince, defiantly. "I will do what I please, and say what I please, and have what friends I please."

The Minister shrugged his shoulders and rang the bell; and with this exchange of amenities the interview terminated.

The Minister did his best to have M. Jean-Jacques Roquet conveyed under escort to the frontier, but it was much less easy than he had thought. M. Roquet screamed and barricaded himself in his room, and harangued the hotel waiters. Prince Shepskine was not so firmly rooted in the favour of the Court as to risk doing an arbitrary act without a shadow of pretext. His main objection to the Frenchman was, that, being a notorious republican, his intimacy with the nephew of a Minister might give rise to unpleasant gossip amongst the crowd of envious folk who lie in ambush round men in high places to traduce and supplant them. But when he saw what a noise the man of letters was disposed to make, he thought it prudent to let him alone, or, rather, to reserve the persecution of him for some more convenient opportunity. Prince Moleskine stuck valiantly by his friend, though, in his heart of hearts,—having nothing but trouble to expect in his company,—he wished him at Kamtschatka. The police were instructed to offer an apology, and to declare that they had mistaken M. Roquet for somebody else-which they did with extraordinary good grace and civility. M. Roquet seized upon the occasion to ask for his printing-press, his works on political economy, his manuscript and his Revue des Deux Mondes. The police gave him a blank form of petition to fill up, and after driving to seven different Government offices and conversing with twenty-three clerks, the journalist was assured that inquiries would certainly be made, and that he might call for an answer in six or seven weeks' time.

Prince Moleskine, however, was in a hurry to be off, and hastened his preparations for that purpose. St. Petersburg is only supportable to those who have money. The Prince's ruin was better known among his own countrymen than it was in Paris, and it is never particularly agreeable to be stared at and pointed at, and even tittered at, as poor Prince Moleskine apprehended he would be, if he ventured to go into society. As for M. Roquet, the sedulous attentions of the man in the braided cap, who followed him closely wherever he went, had ended by giving him the nightmare. He, too, was anxious to be gone, and he heaved a sigh of relief when he found himself in the heavy landau that was to bear him away to the province of Tcheremiss. In addition to the Prince's valet, groom, and cook, who journeyed everywhere with their master, the travellers were this time accompanied by a house-steward, who had been engaged at St. Petersburg. He was recommended by the landlord of the hotel, and was a Pole, with a shock of red hair, and a surprising talent for murdering every language in Europe. He talked to the Prince's valet in German; to his cook in Italian; to his groom in English, and completely ingratiated himself with M. Jean-Jacques Roquet, by declaring that though his-M. Stanislas Milkiewickz's-body was in Russia, vet his heart was in France, in the land of Danton and Roquet! The journey was as painful a pilgrimage as any man could wish to his bitterest foe, as an expiation for a life of sin. Save in winter, when the roads are frozen, and one can ride in sledges, heaven help the bones of the Russian traveller! Ruts two feet deep; branches of trees lying across the roadway; huge flints as big as cannon-balls; and every couple of hours a break-down, with no houses or light, no wheelwrights within twenty miles to set matters straight, and a fierce howling savage wind sweeping up clouds of dust to blind the horses, and choke the passengers. Here, the landau comes to a dead standstill, imbedded up to the axletrees in slush, and the travellers have to get out and push and tug, and perspire until they are wet through, and covered from top to toe with mud. Further on, the harness breaks in two or three places at once, and has to be mended with bits of string, pocket-handkerchiefs, braces, or with one's necktie. One of the horses then lies down in the dirt, and refuses to move on. The Russian driver takes to coaxing: "My little father, my pigeon, my pretty cousin, don't lie down so and break the heart of your poor isvostshick." This occupies about half-an-hour, during which the travellers blow on their finger-tips, and flatten their noses against the window-panes, to see if there is a village within view. The roadside inns have nothing to offer one but a brick floor to sleep on. People take their own provisions with them; if not, they must put up with bread, a few shades darker than the schwarz-brod of Germany, and infinitely more sour. Perhaps also they may get a piece of raw ham, derived from a gaunt, thin pig, tough and stringy; but this is problematical. To crown the pleasures of the voyage, one must exhibit one's passport and road-bill five or six times a day at the posting-houses; and if one has let either of them drop

in one of the numerous breakdowns, there is nothing for it but to go back all the way and get another. A Russian postmaster would allow himself to be hashed into mincement sooner than allow you to pass without the written official order.

It was exactly five weeks after setting out from St. Petersburg, that the Prince, his friend, and suite, drove up the moss-grown avenue, which led to Moleskine Hall, or Moleskine Castle, eighty-three versts from the town of Oufa, and twenty from the River Kama. The house had an imposing appearance, and gave the beholder an idea of regal pomp, until he got inside and saw the faded furniture, damp walls, cracked ceilings, and general look of desertion and squalor that hung about the old place, which had not been inhabited by a Moleskine since the time of the Emperor Paul. It took the two friends a week to organize themselves comfortable quarters, by selecting the best of the chairs and tables, the carpets and curtains with fewest holes in them, and the rooms which had least suffered from decay. Prince Moleskine was evidently humiliated at showing himself so considerably reduced from his Parisian splendour; but he was no longer sorry that M. Jean-Jacques Roquet had accompanied him, for life would have been simply unbearable in such a place without a companion. The journalist on his side bore everything remarkably well. Before leaving Paris, he had obtained a commission as travelling correspondent to a daily paper, and he was no sooner settled in his new abode, than he fell to work writing astonishing letters upon the things he had seen and passed through. Editors were only afraid of M. Roquet when he took to handling French affairs. There was no objection to his abusing Russia, and the Russian Government, so that M. Roquet gave his pen and imagination full play. Unfortunately, as we shall see by-and-by, all his letters were stopped by the police; whence posterity has been deprived of the pleasure of reading many pleasant chapters, and doubtless of acquiring much novel information.

Three months passed in an uneventful manner, the days succeeding each other monotonously. Up to mid-day the Prince was generally busy with his agent, either riding about the estate, or going over accounts with him to see what could be made of his dilapidated budgets. M. Roquet during the same time wrote, with admirable care and zeal, the letters which were never to reach their destination, or busied himself about the first chapters of his work in three volumes on the Social Regeneration of Russia. In the afternoons the friends used often to go out shooting, the game on the estate being as abundant as if a gun had never been fired in the district. However, there is the stuff of a conspirator in every radical Frenchman, and M. Roquet was not the man to confine himself to exploits entirely harmless and peaceful. He had not come to Russia to enjoy himself, he was bent on dabbling in political achievements of some sort, and he had by no means abandoned his idea of preaching what he called his doctrines of truth among the moujiks. Unfortunately, there was no possibility of starting the light-disseminating Harbinger in the district. In

the first place there was no printer within four-and-twenty hours' journey, and in the next, none of the peasants, with the exception of the priest, the postmaster, and the tax-gatherer, could read.

M. Jean-Jacques Roquet was rather of the opinion of Cæsar, that it is better to be first at Moleskine than second at Rome. The little man could not do without his incense, and the homage of a posse of worshippers. He longed to see the honest, squab faces of the peasants gathered round him admiringly, and he cursed the difficulties of the Russian language which stood in the way of his addressing them on topics political and social, and awakening them to a sense of their degradation. He did not confide any of his sentiments on this point to his host, for he had noticed with chagrin that the Prince was less amenable than he had hoped to the language of truth and liberty; but he took into his confidence the excellent Pole, Milkiewickz, who appeared filially devoted to him and expressed his readiness to abet him in any schemes he might form for overturning anything or overthrowing anybody.

It was a great comfort to the zealous Frenchman to have this faithful Pole with him. M. Stanislas Milkiewickz agreed with everything he said, and was the person who always rode with his letters to the post, so that they might be in safe hands. When pressed to it by the journalist, M. Milkiewickz would tell a heart-rending tale of the afflictions which his family had endured at the hands of the Russians. At certain passages he used to tear his red hair out in large bunches, and run his head against the wall with avowed intention of putting an end to his miserable life. It took M. Roquet an immense deal of bodily strength and oral persuasion to reconcile him with existence: on a certain occasion the two fell into one another's arms and wept. How not feel confidence in such a man? One day M. Roquet revealed to him a scheme for holding secret socialist meetings among the peasantry of a neighbouring landholder, with an ulterior view to provoking an agrarian revolution.

The landholder upon whose tenants M. Roquet proposed to begin his work of enlightenment was a wealthy prince, who lived in St. Petersburg in winter, at Baden or Gastein in summer, and like most Russian noblemen of fortune, never came near his estate save once in the course of every five years, to levy extra supplies of money. Of course M. Jean-Jacques Roquet could not do his friend Prince Moleskine the ill-service of exciting his peasantry to sedition, but he had no terms to keep with Prince Moleskine's peighbour, and it pleased him to think he might organize a rising by means of occult meetings held after nightfall in caverns or out-of-the-way barns, like the early Christians of yore, and the Albigenses. It was arranged that the Reformer should write his Harbinger in manuscript, and that Stanislas Milkiewickz should translate it into Russian, read it aloud to the peasants, and give copies of it to the two or three cultivated moujiks who could read.

It should be mentioned that the peasants were in as hopelessly miserable a condition as it is possible for human beings to be. The

emancipation had not done them much good,-rather the contrary; for whilst they had been serfs they had always had food enough and clothes enough, whereas ever since they had been set free they had thought it better to remain idle than to work, and had borne the inevitable consequences. As far as it was possible to understand their ideal of a perfect social system, they expected their landlord to feed and clothe them for nothing, that is, without exacting labour or rent. They were very drunken, and, of course, servile beyond conception. On first arriving at Moleskine, M. Roquet had turned red with indignation on seeing that a peasant who brought him a letter knelt down in the mud on both knees to deliver it. He had gesticulated to the peasant to rise, but the man, thinking he was going to be beaten, had crouched down and whined. "Just heaven!" exclaimed the apostle of liberty, "is this possible?" And his devoted friend, the Pole, answered, "Alas! it is. But we will enlighten them, Monsieur, and then they shall walk proudly like you and I-"

It was a grand day, therefore, for M. Jean-Jacques Roquet when, after six weeks of secret meetings in caverns and barns, he was set upon one afternoon by twenty moujiks, who carried him in triumph round a field, pawed him all over, kissed him, and then forced a pint of the national vodki (whisky) down his throat, as a token of their esteem. The cavern meetings had been a success. M. Roquet stood on a stool and preached in French, whilst M. Stanislas Milkiewickz translated his utterances into Russian. When any sentiment unusually fine left the lips of M. Milkiewickz, the peasants pounded their boots on the floor and threw up their hats. The passages best appreciated were those in which the iniquity of levying rent was exposed and reviled with bitter invective. "No landlords!" thundered M. Roquet. "No landlords!" echoed M. Milkiewickz, in a shrill falsetto. "No landlords!" roared the moujiks. "Every man earn his own bread by the sweat of his brow!" continued M. Roquet. "Yes, by the sweat of his brow!" clamoured the overjoyed peasants; "and when the crops fail, then the landlords must nourish us!"

After every one of the meetings, and every week when the Harbinger appeared, M. Milkiewickz used to write a long letter to "a cousin" of his who lived at St. Petersburg. M. Roquet often wondered at the epistolary fervour of his confidant; but the Pole had such a good heart! He and his cousin had been brought up together, and the latter would be sure to fall ill, he said, if he did not receive four pages of close writing two or three times a week.

Things were at this juncture when throughout all the district it was rumoured that Prince Moleskine's neighbour, the Prince Roubeloff, was going to pay a flying visit to his estate, to raise money as usual. On like occasions it had been the antique usage of the peasants to groan, weep, and bury their earnings in the ground, whence they were only dragged out eventually by dint of menaces from the Prince's agent. On this occasion it struck M. Roquet that it would be a noble sight and a startling if the peasants,

instead of groaning and hiding their money, were to gather boldly together in front of Prince Roubeloff's castle, to groan at that nobleman as he drove up to his door, to pelt him with a few stones, and obstinately to refuse paying rents. He consulted with M. Stanislas Milkiewickz, who waxed enthusiastic at the idea, and withdrew soon after to write a longer letter than ever to his cousin at St. Petersburg. The peasants were all sounded, and not a dastard heart found among them. The preaching of M. Roquet had given them courage. If he would only consent to head them, they, their wives, and their children would follow him wheresoever he chose to lead them, and break all the windows of Prince Roubeloff's castle if he liked. M. Roquet was transported. He began to feel like Tiberius Gracchus and Masaniello.

Meanwhile Prince Moleskine had been growing a little astonished at the numerous goings to and fro of his friend. M. Roquet would disappear at unaccountable times and return home excited and muddy at strange hours in the night. He never said anything to the Prince as to where he went nor how he busied himself, and when pressed very hard with questions would only answer mystically that he had the regeneration of a great people at heart. This alarmed Prince Moleskine, who had no great passion for regenerating, and one afternoon (it was on the eve of the day when Prince Roubeloff was expected) he asked his friend point-blank where on earth he spent his time when he went out of nights?

"Prince," answered the small man, who was flushed and looked unusually joyous—"Prince, there's no reason why I should conceal it from you any longer. If you come with me by-and-by you shall see."

This was all the Prince could extract until nightfall, but when dusk had set in M. Roquet took his host to a barn, at the door of which, to his considerable surprise, he made him swear eternal secrecy. This done, he pushed open the door, and the mystified Prince found himself in a large place, lighted by two flickering rushlights, but with not a human being visible. "There are three hundred regenerated peasants there," exclaimed M. Roquet triumphantly, but saying this he stopped short and looked blankly round the deserted room.

"Hullo!" he shouted, "what's this? Hi! Milkiewickz, why are they not here?"

The faithful Milkiewickz had followed the two gentlemen to the door; but he had disappeared of a sudden and was not to be seen. The Frenchman went out to look into the dark, but as he set his foot on the threshold six men surrounded him with lanterns. "In the Czar's name I arrest you," cried one, stepping forward. And another walking up to the Prince said: "Prince Moleskine, you must come with us to St. Petersburg."

"To St. Petersburg!" exclaimed the Prince astonished. "What for?"
"To answer the charge of having organized a Socialist conspiracy with
the aid of your accomplice, this Frenchman."

IV.

A few days later all the papers of Europe printed this telegram :-

A formidable Socialist conspiracy has just been discovered near Oufa, in the Province of Tcheremiss. Some thousands of peasants are said to be implicated in the affair, one of the objects of which was to assassinate the Senator Prince Roubeloff, to burn his eastle, and then to provoke a general agrarian rising. The ringleader is Prince Moleskine, nephew of the Minister Shepskine; and it is supposed that several leading members of the aristocracy are amongst his accomplices.

Soon after there was a trial, and the principal witness was the honest Milkiewickz, who turned out to be a police spy. His testimony was conclusive. M. Jean-Jacques Roquet and Prince Moleskine were, along with some two score of regenerate peasants, found guilty of conspiring to undermine society, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Prince Moleskine, however, as being a Minister's nephew, was secretly pardoned and ordered out of the country. On the "letters of mercy" which were delivered him in prison he found written, in his uncle's hand: "Paul-Petrowich, this is in acknowledgment of the Strasburg pies. I think you will agree with me, that you would have done as well to go to the Caucasus."

As for M. Roquet, on hearing that the Prince had been amnestied, he exclaimed at once: "Ah! I knew it. He was sold to the police, he and Milkiewickz together. When I get out of prison I shall send a challenge to them both. They have betrayed me; but, what is worse, they have betrayed their country." And with grave indignation he added: "And to think that if it had not been for them Russia might now have been a Republic!" Needless to say that amongst the general public Prince Moleskine was credited with having contrived and organized the whole affair, and that amongst journalists, historians, and all who plume themselves upon a knowledge of politics, the plot will be known to the end of time as "Prince Moleskine's Conspiracy,"

Social Slabery.

We are all slaves, it is said. We are in abject bondage to an absolute power, whose laws are enforced by sanctions not less binding than those which are due to the will of the supreme legislature. Our taskmaster is known as the World, or Society, or Respectability, or Mrs. Grundy, or some other name at which the boldest cheek turns pale, and against which the loftiest courage fails to rouse an effectual revolt. Poets and novelists and satirists try in vain to stimulate us to break our bonds. We retire into our accustomed humility and submission so soon as our masters come against us, armed not with swords but with scourges. We dread sneers and ridicule and even the commonplace gossip which we affect to despise, and are only too glad to fall back into the ranks and escape censure by doing as nearly as may be precisely what everybody else is doing.

The world is too much with us; late or soon, Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;

and though we may escape from its presence for brief intervals, we can no more do without it than without the atmosphere which we breathe, or than a drunkard can do without his habitual dram. Women, we are told, are the greatest sufferers from this miserable code. They suffer, not merely from the positive laws which the advocates of feminine rights are endeavouring to repeal, but from a subtler and more penetrating influence. They are slaves in soul as well as under forcible constraint. Submission has become part of their very nature, and is inculcated upon them as a virtue. The few who rise superior to the prejudices of the time suffer cruelly from the hostility which they excite, and suffer even more because nobody can break loose at once from an established code of morality without suffering some moral deterioration. The bitterest part of their martyrdom to the cause of their sex is that they are not only ridiculed, but do, in fact, more or less deserve to be ridiculed. The slave who is just freed from his bonds is not yet acclimatized to the new atmosphere which he breathes, and he brings some discredit upon liberty because he has hardly learnt how to use it. Educate a woman to the full extent of her powers: let her be, as these advocates assert that she will be, as capable by her intrinsic abilities of taking part in the battle of life as any of the male sex; and yet the main result to her may be the awakening of cravings which can never be satisfied under existing conditions; for even if new careers be opened to her, she will hardly be able to tread them firmly without awkwardness and self-consciousness. She will deserve to be looked upon, as Johnson expressed it, as a dancing dog, whom we admire, not because he dances well, but because he dances at all; only we must

suppose, to complete the parallel, that we regard dancing as something highly unbecoming to the canine nature and to be discouraged as an improper exhibition. The dog which danced under such circumstances would probably be a rather disagreeable dog.

That word "improper" is supposed by French novelists to have a mysterious force in England; and to indicate the extent of our subservience to this degrading bondage. It is the badge of our slavery. Let anything, however natural in itself, be tabooed by fastening upon it this sacred label, and an Englishman will shrink from it as from an object tainted by the plague. Everywhere in France we see official notices importing a defense to do this or that or the other. In England the word improper is written in invisible, but to the insular mind not imperceptible characters, across a number of paths, and we obey the warning as implicitly as our neighbours obey official authority. The English Sunday, for example, is a trifling but conspicuous example of the truth. It is improper to take a walk on that day; it is improper to stay away from church; and highly improper to join in any kind of public amusement. Hence that inexpressible dreariness and coldness of the English Sabbath which produces so unpleasant a sensation in foreigners, and their profound belief that Englishmen habitually commit suicide sooner or later to save themselves from its recurrent horrors. The opinion that this strictness is due to any religious convictions is repelled on the simple ground that extreme dulness is not a natural part of the religious theory of a Christian Sunday; and therefore it is supposed that, somehow or other, the intense gloom which shrouds an English town on the first day of the week is part of the homage which we pay to some unknown divinity whose function it is to decide without appeal what is and what is not improper. This subservience, however, is not confined, like many other parts of our religion, to one day exclusively; but, in addition to condemning the seventh of our lives to unqualified gloom, converts the whole of English society into a machinery for enforcing a superficial decorum, whilst at bottom we are, though I should perhaps shrink from saying it, no better than our neighbours. Hence that inconceivable awkwardness which is always characteristic of the true Briton. He lives in fear of offending against some undefined rule, and incurring the most terrible consequences, if he ever ventures for a moment to be natural and unconstrained. It is impossible that a man should be graceful whilst hampered by this mysterious fear: he wraps himself, as far as may be, in a stoical calm, and sternly represses every spontaneous impulse which might lead him to forget for a moment the strict observance of propriety.

I will not inquire how far this unpleasant feature of English life is a true portrait, and whether other nations may not suffer from allied forms of the same disease. But undoubtedly, whether we are or are not victims in a greater degree than our neighbours, there are many moments at which the iron enters into our souls. Our grandfathers used to lament over the progress of luxury, and picture to themselves an imaginary

state of nature in which everybody should be perfectly simple and truthful and despise the conventional regulations of an effete society. Their language seems strange in days when we are more inclined to indulge in cant about progress and demonstrate by statistical facts our enormous superiority to our ancestors. But at intervals we talk a language which is identical in substance if not in form. There are times when we wish to burst all chains of habit and to wander far away, if we do not feel quite ready to take a savage woman who may rear our dusky race. The proper cynical mood is apt to overtake us at some of the dreary ceremonies which ape the natural forms of social enjoyment. We stand at an eveningparty like skeletons in patent-leather boots, and moralize upon the humbug and hollowness of the festivity that is going on around us. If all the crowd who are treading upon each other's toes could for one moment be induced to speak the truth what strange revelations would be made in a few minutes! What a quantity of petty jealousies and of mean ambitions would come to light! How small would be the results in real happiness to anybody concerned! How frankly we should confess that we were all boring each other to the very verge of despair, and that we would infinitely rather be at home, if it were not for some vague and unaccountable impression that it is the proper thing to bore and to be bored! Add all the toad-eating and the match-making and the place-hunting which, as novelists inform us, is taking place in every direction, and we shall be half inclined to believe that society is nothing but an organized system of hypocrisy, whose rules are made by clever rogues in order to provide a decent veil for their own trickery and selfishness. If people avowed their real motives the world would be too ugly a place to inhabit, and therefore an external decency is strictly enforced to cover its real deformity.

The English novel is frequently quoted by foreign critics as illustrating the freezing influences of insular respectability. We dare not speak of things which everybody knows to exist, because they are under this sacred ban; and thus all novels are emasculated and insipid. A certain school of recent writers has tried to break the charm. It is perhaps absurd to attribute to them any aim beyond that of producing a little immediate amusement; but if they seriously intended what their language seems to imply, we must suppose that they were plotting a general revolt against the laws by which society is at present tied and bound. They preach the doctrine that all is vanity with a new application. Society, according to them, is ruled by very stupid and highly respectable old fogies, who enforce their leaden rule with imperturbable stolidity. Every noble outburst of passion that scorns the old conventions is pitilessly crushed; and society, which is unmerciful to the slightest breach of propriety, is lenient to the most grovelling selfishness or the meanest avarice. There are, fortunately, a few brilliant exceptions to this dreary monotony; and, in most cases, the male exceptions are, singularly enough, young guardsmen of effeminate exterior, who conceal tremendous muscles under their gorgeous attire, and wills of iron

under their apparent apathy. When they find that the petty restraints of modern society are too cramping for their energies they are in the habit of plunging into wild excesses in foreign capitals—enlisting in the Zouaves or lion-hunting in Central Africa-hereby proving that England is not good enough to hold them. When they meet an unfortunate clergyman or barrister of the ordinary type they wither him by a bitter sarcasm, even if they may not feel it due to themselves to sling out their fists with fearful power from their hips and level the wretched being to the ground. Perhaps I have been unlucky, but I confess that my small experience of the fast young guardsman has been rather different. I have found him to be generally what is called a thoroughly good fellow, that is to say, an utterly brainless but rather affable biped, who, if he gets into mischief, does it in the most commonplace, not to say the most stupid, fashion. It is quite as easy to be a slave to conventionality in vice as in respectable life; and utter stupidity is by no means confined to the classes who go to church on Sunday and sit behind a counter on weekdays. It might be a matter of dispute whether these Byronic or Satanic persons do not lead existences quite as humdrum, though not quite as useful, as those of their neighbours, who are content to plod along the ordinary high-road of decent humanity. To say the truth, I have a rooted disbelief in the scathing-satire line of business. It is so very easy and, as a rule, so remarkably pointless. Genuine satire, indeed-the fierce indignation of a lofty nature cast upon evil times, and witnessing, without power to oppose effectually, the triumph of baser men-is impressive, if not exactly agreeable. But our modern satirists seem generally to have inherited the affectation which almost neutralized Byron's passionate power, and to have lost the power which enables us to put up with the affectation. Their denunciations of the luxury and selfishness of society seem to be for the most part a transparent device under cover of which they may gloat over the external splendour of the vice which they affect to denounce. Their revolt is not that of a powerful intellect against shams and hypocrisies, but that of the valet who has a grudge against the sumptuous millinery and upholstery which he yet admires at the very bottom of his soul. It is pleasant to see how ostentatiously these virtuous modern Jeremiahs exhibit their intimacy with the wines which the aristocracy drinks and the cigars which it smokes, and even the addresses of the tailors which clothe it; how they seem to roll round their tongues the delicious morsels of sporting slang from which, as it appears, the conversation of the upper classes receives its exquisite flavour; and how they peep, as it were, through the key-holes of the smoking-rooms, whither the darlings of our drawing-rooms retire to indulge in charmingly naughty scandal. The clubs in particular are supposed, by some freak of the imagination, to be little oases in our dreary social wilderness, where the most sparkling wit, clothed in a tongue scarcely understood by the vulgar, is always playing with relentless vigour against all that the stupid humdrum world outside is

accustomed to hold most sacred. I would not affect any great intimacy with these charming retreats of our Byronic youth; but I have a certain suspicion that the intrinsic merits of the conversation would prove to be about equal to that which may be heard in an average omnibus, or in a second-class railway-carriage. Colonel Crawley was the real human being of which Guy Livingstone is the modern travesty, and half-a-dozen Crawleys form about as dull a combination as ever refused to give out a spark of wit under most energetic impulses. Our English satirists of this class do, in some degree, justify the foreign criticism. If they were permitted to be unreservedly wicked they might possibly be amusing; but our sense of decorum forces them generally to confine themselves to hinting at wickedness under a disguise of virtuous indignation; and I cannot say that, on the whole, their talents are so great as to make one regret the limitation. We had better stick to the good old domestic decencies without grumbling.

The Englishman, it may be said, is in bondage to propriety, even when he is trying to give himself the airs of emancipation. He can no more forget his respectability than he can get off his own shadow; and is awkward and stiff in his motives when he fancies that he has cast off his bonds; he is like that German baron who was found jumping over chairs and tables, and explained his eccentric manœuvres by the declaration, "Sh'abbrens être vif;" the national clumsiness sticks to him still, and his freest attitudes are nothing but spasmodic contortions. This objection, pure and simple, to decency and propriety, is not very likely to be successful, because, after all, though our views of what constitutes propriety may be narrow, it is highly desirable to have some regulations of the kind. However much we may dislike hats and chignons, we cannot return to the neat coats of blue paint supposed to have been fashionable amongst the early Britons. It is, however, a fair proposition that we might dress in a much more reasonable style than that we actually adopt. Modern costumes may be shown to be prejudicial to the constitution; and the conventional manners, which are to society what dress is to the body, may cruelly cramp our souls and intellects as tight boots cramp our feet. Herr Teufelsdroeck might expound his clothes' philosophy to some purpose in this respect, and has, indeed, said much that goes very straight to the point. "Is not the fair fabric of society itself," he asks, "with all its royal mantles and pontifical stoles, whereby, from nakedness and dismemberment, we are organized into polities, into nations, and a whole co-operating mankind, the creation, as has here been often irrefragably evinced, of the tailor alone?" And if so, is not the fashion in which our clothes are cut of most vital importance? The denunciation of feminine extravagance in millinery is, indeed, one of the satirist's most favourite topics, as it has been any time these two thousand years and more. . But, not to follow the analogy too far, it may be fairly argued that our present arrangements are increasingly dangerous to the best part of our natures. Society, it is said, is becoming so artificial that our best emotions are

summarily crushed. It encourages an ignoble struggle for wealth and celebrity, and fails to recognize merit of the loftier kinds. A poor man, though he were a Shakspeare or a Newton, would be neglected, and the stupidest lout who ever inherited a princely fortune would receive incense enough to turn the strongest head. If, by some freak of fancy, we make a social pet of a really noble character, we do our best to spoil him with flattery more poisonous than neglect; and with transparent hypocrisy we apply a different code of laws to men and women, to the rich and poor, to those who have and to those who have not a certain superficial polish. We are pompous and elaborate and formal, and our amusements—according to the one good saying of a rather ponderous thinker—go near to make our lives unbearable. It is not to be expected that we shall enter the millennium as soon as Dr. Cumming promises; but may we not hope for a clearer atmosphere, less stifling to all honourable aspirations, and favourable to the growth of deformed specimens of humanity?

The question is somewhat of the largest, and I will only try to suggest one or two of the more obvious reflections bearing upon it. And, in the first place, it may be well to start from the palpable but generally forgotten truth that civilized society is of necessity conventional and artificial. Those adjectives, on which so much stress is sometimes laid, simply express the necessary condition of our living together at all. Certain arbitrary arrangements are just as necessary, and, for much the same reasons, as a currency. It is only a savage who has no established standard of value, and who, with amiable frankness, hits every man over the head as soon as he takes a dislike to him. The petty ceremonies of life are the small change which enables business to be carried on without striking a new bargain at every step; though it is not to be denied that many of them become exceedingly vexatious and eminently absurd. Nobody ever attended a funeral without inwardly reviling the hideous apparatus of undertakers, with all their preposterous mummery, which grates so harshly upon our feelings during the most solemn events of our lives. Why can't we be natural and simple even when we are taking our last leave of our dearest friends, and why must we be worried with all the buffoonery of mutes and plumes and hearses? The performance might be infinitely improved—as in most countries it is, in fact, less revolting than here, where the undertakers have somehow placed their feet upon our necks. But that some conventional arrangement is essential, is obvious from the fact that the very danger which we most reasonably desire to avoid is precisely that of being natural and simple. We wish to have some mode of testifying respect without explaining to the world at large whether the deceased was as the apple of our eye, or was an old ruffian who has at last taken the step which public opinion had unanimously demanded for years. There is a decency in such matters which it is needless to defend. The public is only too anxious as it is to pry into feelings with which they have no concern; and it is as well to have a uniform in which the true mourner and the indifferent observer

may equally pass muster. We must submit to do many things not very excellent in themselves simply because our neighbours do them, on penalty of advertising our private fancies and crotchets to mankind at large. People who talk about the decline of individuality are fond of declaring that eccentricity should be encouraged, because it implies indifference to the tyranny of the majority. It may be so; but I confess that eccentric people often seem to me to be only slaves to public opinion who have hit upon a more cunning way of flattering their master and appealing to the world at large for wonder if not for praise. The value of doing as the world does is that it enables you to think as pleases yourself. You are like a person who wears a domino at a masquerade instead of appearing in a fancy costume, and practically you have most liberty when you do

not dash your peculiarities in people's faces.

To this must be added the equally obvious remark that the rules of society have, and ought to have, only an indirect relation to the rules of morality. That Utopia in which the virtuous man would always be rewarded and the vicious man always punished would be, like other Utopias, simply a most intolerable form of tyranny. It is sometimes complained that we are civil to a sordid and ungrateful scoundrel, with just soul enough to save the expense of salt, whilst we are pitiless to a person who has committed a petty breach of social decorum. That we are often too harsh is undeniable; but such contrasts are just as necessary as it is that the law should punish a man for hitting a cab-horse too hard, whilst it cannot touch him for gross ingratitude to his mother. If social conventions and legislation tried to cover the whole field of morality, we should have an inquisition which would be not only intolerably vexatious, but in the highest degree immoral. I may forbid a man to come to dinner in his shirt-sleeves, because it is a breach of the rules which are only to be maintained by common consent; I can't punish him for being penurious or even vicious in private, because I have no right to constitute myself his censor. If I endeavoured to do so, I should be bound also to make allowance for vicious conduct which did not, in my opinion, imply a corrupt nature; and if that were the rule, society would begin by attempting a puritanical rigidity, and would end by ceasing to be even decent. In short, men have to live together, good, bad, and indifferent; saints who would once have been canonized, and sinners who would be well qualified for the hulks; and we arrange terms to enable us to meet without flying at each other's throats, or even treading unnecessarily on each other's toes. If the rules are not absurd in themselves, and are favourable, on the whole, to our moral health, we must be tolerably satisfied, without complaining that they leave the most important offences to be dealt with in courts of a very different nature. We can no more complain that society is hypocritical for dealing only with questions of property, than that a board of health is hypocritical because it only looks after nuisances, and does not attempt to improve the minds of those who cause them.

A good deal of popular indignation is often generated by a false conception of these simple principles. If our censors are not altogether wrong in their wrath, they are apt to lay the blame on the wrong shoulders. Society, it is said, sets an undue value upon rank and wealth, and sets up very inferior idols for our adoration. And yet, to do them justice, there are some great conveniences about rank and wealth, which we cannot quite overlook. A man of rank is a man who lives in a society which has been studying for many generations how to make itself thoroughly comfortable, and which has naturally succeeded to a very great extent; he has probably acquired a sort of polish which is not altogether equal to Christian charity, but which, in its way, has very great charms for people of cultivated taste. When a man is accused of being a snob, I sometimes fancy that it is only that he has a higher appreciation of certain kinds of refinement than his neighbours, and a skin more sensitive to delicate titillation. A wealthy man, again, can offer some very tangible advantages. He can give good dinners, to which no person whose physical and spiritual natures are in a proper state of equilibrium should ever affect to be indifferent; he lives in a comfortable house; and, in short, has everything round him that the wit of man has hitherto contrived to ward off the inconveniences of dwelling upon this ridiculous little planet. It sounds very base to say that one has rather a liking for rich as compared with poor friends; and of course it is base, if it includes any degrading compliances. But if we prefer the plain truth to fine varnish, why should we deny that there is something gratifying about contact with wealth? The rich man is simply one who has an unusual share of all the physical objects of human desire and can impart them freely to his friends. Nobody who is not ready to be a fakir. or to take up his abode in the Chartreuse, can deny that he is more or less accessible to such pleasures. Therefore if two men are equally agreeable for their intrinsic merits, and one can season his society with irreproachable wine, whilst the other can only wash down his conversation with small beer, why should we not draw a little closer to the man from whom we can derive the higher gratification? I abandon this problem to the reflections of casuists; but I will at once add that undoubtedly these lower pleasures attract a much larger share than they ought of our desires. I am afraid that, if people ever said what they thought, most men would prefer the stalled ox with an average stockbroker to a dinner of herbs with Shakspeare. The popularity of dinner-givers depends, as has been fully explained, much more upon certain little attentions to the weaknesses which beset the human being at feeding-time than upon the brilliant qualities of the assembled guests. I fear that the same principle runs through society, and it perhaps proves, what I shall certainly not deny, that the great majority of mankind is extremely stupid. There are, in fact, few more important truths to be kept in mind, though writers in general think it desirable to sink it in compliment to their readers. One consequence is that a good deal of what is denounced as snobbery, flunkeyism, and other names (which, I may remark, will never become

obsolete for want of proper objects,) is simply a natural result of the predominance of our sensual over our intellectual natures. We like to be warm and well-fed, to be clothed in purple and fine linen, and I don't see why we should be ashamed to confess it; though the further truth, that we don't care as much as we should for pleasures of a loftier kind, is a very excellent ground for humiliation. I only regret that we should try to conceal this disagreeable fact from ourselves by talking about our bondage to social prejudices, when the real cause of our misfortune is that people have so little genuine pleasure in things which wealth cannot buy. The disease is rather more deeply seated than we admit, and will not be removed by any change in our social regulations.

Hence we find that people who attempt a summary revolt against these artificial arrangements are apt to find that they have carried their complaint with them. The enthusiasts who tried to carry out the socialist schemes were frankly astonished to discover that, when they had gathered two or three hundred people into a big house and abolished all private rights of property, they had not succeeded in eradicating selfishness. On the same principle, some of the noblest specimens of the full-blown snob, with all his normal peculiarities in a state of unusual development, may be discovered amongst the most unequivocally democratic nations. The object of their worship is perhaps a trifle more material and less picturesque than ours: but what are they to do? If a man has the soul of a snob, he must fall down before such idols as are nearest at hand; and the negative advantage of having no home-grown aristocracy does not make them any more delicate in their tastes or give them more discriminating intellects. Even so I fancy that our most determined Radicals are sometimes as humdrum as the most prejudiced of old-fashioned Tories. They propose, it is true, to turn everything upside down-to abolish the establishment, to do away with hereditary peerages, to introduce female suffrage and secular education, and the liberty of divorce, and a universal division of landed property -all of which plans, for anything I have to say to the contrary, may be highly desirable. I only remark that they would not of necessity make life more interesting or more exalted. When one talks to these ardent persons, one is generally pleased because an innocent enthusiasm is always more or less gratifying to the spectator; the fact that he does not share it gives him a pleasant sense of superiority; but I think that we are also struck by the fact that they are a trifle dull, and that human ingenuity would probably devise means of introducing narrow-mindedness and stupidity even under the most novel patent arrangements. When society was all rolled out into a dead level, it might appear that twenty million free and equal citizens had as many petty prejudices and mean ambitions as we contrive to accommodate at present. Indeed the gentlemen who revolt with the greatest energy against private decorum, as well as against political regulations, do not appear to be specially successful. A poet or a novelist makes a sensation for a short time by being extremely immoral and dealing plainly with scenes which most people prefer to pass without

notice. It is an obvious trick, and it has its merits in a purely artistic point of view. And yet after a time, when one has waded through the improper pages in search of a new sensation, it generally turns out to be a delusion. We feel like the epicure who had exhausted every resource known to the culinary art, and declared on the whole that nothing was equal to a plain dish of tripe. The good old stupid domestic novel, where nothing is allowed more improper than a marriage without the leave of the bride's grandmother, and where everybody has a fortune of five thousand a year at the last page, has its charms after a steady course of the latest French fiction. One comes to the conclusion that the ordinary rules of propriety are not the causes, though they may be amongst the results of our general dulness. We have done our best to kick over the traces, and find that the real harness is that which we carry about with us from our birth.

I say this merely by way of justifying the pleasant opinion that the defective arrangements of which we are apt to complain arise from deeper causes, and are therefore more difficult of cure, than very sanguine people sometimes appear to anticipate. I wish I could expect to see a much purer and simpler state of society, or one in which ambition was generally directed to worthier objects, and praise distributed in accordance with a higher standard of merit, for then I should hope to rival Methuselah. I fully believe, however, that our slavery, such as it is, might be rendered far less oppressive by moderate changes. It is perhaps impossible to give an accurate diagnosis of that disease of vulgarity and snobbishness which makes us fit subjects for this bondage. It is no doubt owing in part to a cause which Tocqueville would have revelled in explaining. We are more or less in a chronic state of revolution and suffer hence unpleasant consequences. In old days each man was born in his own class, he was brought up from early youth with the appropriate set of ideas, and was therefore prepared to discharge his duties with ease and dignity. He was like a mechanic who has been apprenticed from boyhood to a particular trade, and knows exactly what he is to do and when he is to refrain from doing anything. There were deep lines of demarcation which nobody thought of overstepping, any more than a lap-dog would think of drawing a carriage or the horses propose to come into the drawing-room. Grievous wrongs might be inflicted, but each class might have a dignity as it had a costume of its own. Now we are shifted hither and thither, and mixed up in such strange confusion that nobody is quite certain of his place, and every one feels that he may be unduly presumptuous or more humble than becomes him. We find old customs surviving, which we are half disposed to repudiate and half to accept as part of the necessary order of nature. Of course we are clamsy and diffident and obtrusive by turns, and feel that there is something humiliating even about the loyalty which was once a purely elevating passion. We all feel the awkwardness which would be inflicted upon the imaginary footman, whom democrats are sometimes challenged to invite to table by way of testifying to their principles, and not less upon his unfortunate master. The pushing and scrambling

of modern society produces vulgarity as certainly as shaking up a fluid that has had time to settle makes it turbid instead of clear. It is often melancholy to watch this process taking place at a visible rate of progress in remote districts. We may see in one year a picturesque peasantry with a characteristic costume, and with manners and amusements of their own. The sluices are opened which let in the great flood of tourists, and in a year or two more the whole charm is gone, and our picturesque peasant adopts a hideous imitation of the cockney dress, and becomes no better in appearance than our cabmen or costermongers. He sings the melodies from music-halls instead of his natural airs, and loses his old traditions for the dregs of popular fiction. Is he on the whole the better for the process? That I cannot answer; there is much to be put on both sides of the account; but undoubtedly he is vulgarized, and the essence of the change is that he has become subject to a set of rules which he imperfectly understands, instead of preserving the old notions which were the natural outgrowth of his position. The same process has taken place, and is still proceeding on an enormous scale throughout Europe, from the highest to the lowest classes; and it is no cause for astonishment if it has destroyed much of the old grace, whatever better things it may bring in its place. One of the consequences is, that nobody dares to trust his own taste. Put a thoroughly uneducated man in a picture-gallery, and he will, perhaps, admire some rude drawing, which he fancies he can understand more than the master-pieces of the greatest artists. He is not vulgar, but simply uncultivated. But when he feebly tries to have a taste, to admire not what he likes, but what he guesses that he ought to like, he is probably imposed upon by the first flashy and pretentious imitation of good art which has been produced by some one with as little distinct intelligence as himself. The rough old peasant of former days liked some coarse homespun vernacular, which he really appreciated; the more polished artisan admires, or tries to admire, some wretched piece of high-flown fustian, which appears to him to be the real thing. That detestable product known as buncombe, or tall talk, is an appeal to the minds of people who are too ambitious to venture to confess their ignorance. The main faults of modern society seem to arise from the same origin. We are cumbrous and affected in our manners because we want something better than we used to have, and yet cannot trust our own judgment. The luxury and tasteless ostentation of society is the counterpart of the gaudy colouring which seems to attract the uneducated peasant who has been dazzled out of his old natural customs by sudden revelations from the external world. We have lost the old sense of propriety, and try to dazzle each other by brute force of wasteful expenditure. The fragments of ancient rules which remain have lost their significance, and become dreary bits of hypocrisy. The feudal system was, I imagine, brutal and oppressive; but there was at least something natural in the mutual regard of people who were bound by ties of real service to each other. But, when the

feudal nobleman only preserves a shadow of his dignity without his power, and the emancipated serf does not know whether to insult him in assertion of the new liberty, or to grovel before him in memory of the old servitude, the manners of both become offensive. No human being in this world is so disagreeable as the raw emigrant to a new country, who understands by democracy merely the right of being insolent to well-dressed people and contemptuous of the claims of intellect and refinement. Or, if there is a more disagreeable person, it is the democrat, who is at heart ashamed of his independence, and grovels before the claims which he affects to repudiate.

I will not follow out these reflections further, though I think that they explain much of the ugliness and awkwardness of modern life. The old order changeth, yielding place to new, and we need not repine at the general result; but there are times when the order changes more quickly than the men, and we find ourselves standing amongst a heap of bare ruin, mixed with the raw foundations of new building. Time may harmonize everything, though the transitional state is highly unpleasant. Whenever that desirable change comes, we shall not perhaps find that we are very much freer than at present; only the laws will be more adapted to intelligent and civilized beings, and those who are subject to them will understand their places better.

The impulse towards simple destruction is merely a phase of sentiment in this as in other cases, through which we must hope to pass to something better. Art is not satisfactory when there is no recognized school and no established rules, and we are all vaguely fumbling about, each man after his own devices, with mediæval revivals, and classical revivals, and unadulterated modern ugliness. To make beautiful objects, we must work these conflicting elements into some sort of harmonious unity, in which they may each find their proper expression. Some time or other we may discover how people are to meet each other on friendly terms without senseless extravagance or squalid meanness, and neither insist upon obsolete notions of propriety nor be insensible to the legitimate claims of decency. But to consider the question at any more length would lead metowards so many tangled political and social problems, that I gladly desist, if I have not already gone too far. We have reformers enough in the world, and each of them rides his own hobby with such amazing vigour that it is to be hoped that they will end by doing something; and that the progress of which we hear so much, and occasionally see something, will not have to be qualified by so many doubts and drawbacks. We feel rather like people who are looking on at one of those eruptions of chaos produced by alterations and improvements in an ancient edifice, and vaguely hoping that when all the dust and confusion has settled down, something more tolerable will come out of it all. Only at present the workmen seem to be rather in want of a superintending architect.

A CYNIC.

3 Chinese Commissioner's Foreign Cour.

In the spring of 1866 the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave permission to one of the writers connected with that department to accompany the principal foreign employé in their service on a tour through Europe, with instructions to report upon the condition and aspect of the various countries he should visit. Pin-ch'un, the person thus selected, was a man advanced in years, but having been employed as a writer in the Foreign Inspectorate of Customs, he was less apprehensive of the dangers arising from travel and from unrestricted intercourse with Europeans than the majority of his lettered countrymen. The interest which was manifested by fashionable society in London and Paris during the summer of 1866, on the appearance of the pig-tailed commissioner and his suite, will be remembered by many of the readers of these pages.

Pin-ch'un returned, and presented his report to the Chinese Foreign Office, by whom his exertions were rewarded, it is understood, with a post of some kind in connection with the school of languages. His report has not been made public, and the diary of his travels, in which his experiences were recorded from day to day, has been allowed to circulate in manuscript only. A translation of some portions of this record is now laid before the public. It has been faithfully rendered from the original Chinese, and may be found interesting, if only as a quaint representation of familiar sights and scenes regarded from the point of view of a stranger from the farthest and darkest extremity of Asia.

On the 22nd of February, 1866 (the eighth day of the first moon in the Chinese year), I, Pin-ch'un, Assistant Head-clerk in the Board of Foreign Affairs at Peking, bearing by honorary licence the button of the third official degree, received instructions from the Board of Foreign Affairs, notifying that I had been honoured by imperial commands to travel in the countries of the West, and enjoining that I should compile an accurate record concerning the lands I should visit, and prepare maps (or drawings) with explanatory notes upon the natural features of the same, their condition, climate, and national usages, and bring back the said documents to China, to be put in print for future reference.

13th. Engaged passage on board the Ying-tsze-fei, which sails tomorrow.

15th. Got under way at daybreak. Forty-two li* brought us to Taku, where the forts, on either side of the river, present an imposing appearance, as befits the gateway of the Northern Sea. Passed Taku about eight o'clock, but the bar just below proved an impediment to further

^{*} The Chinese li is usually reckoned as one-third of a mile.—Trans.

progress. The steamer was compelled to wait for high water at 1 p.m., when we were at length able to proceed. The foreigners used an iron weight for ascertaining the depth of water; and in little more than an hour there were eighteen or nineteen feet at the top of the tide, thus enabling us to go on without farther impediment.

17th. In the afternoon the wind increased to a gale, and we were much tossed about. Half of those on board were sick. Towards night the wind

still further increased, and the rolling and pitching grew worse.

18th. The wind gradually fell. Went up into the pilot-house, and took a view around the entire horizon—one vast expanse of sea and sky, a waste of billows without limit in any direction. Many miles off there was a faint thread of smoke to be seen, about two or three inches long. This was pronounced by the captain, after looking at it through a telescope, to be a three-masted steamer. From Taku to this point we have traversed 2,000 li of water, and have seen but this one vessel—a proof that it is no light matter to navigate the seas! At 6 r.m. the wind ceased, and we caught sight for the first time of the new moon. In the evening a fog came on, and the vessel was hove to. From Yen-tai to this point we have made 1,500 li.

19th. Shortly before 6 A.M. the fog lifted; whereupon the anchor was got up, and we proceeded on our way. At 8 A.M. passed Sha-wei Island, and here shifted our course to N.W.* About ten o'clock sighted the entrance to Wusung. From Sha-wei Island to the entrance it is 240 li, the whole of which distance lies within the waters of the Yang-tsze-kiang.

A distance of forty li from the entrance (at Wusung) brought us to Shanghai. Both banks of the river Hwang-p'u are lined with foreign houses, densely packed together; whilst the view presented by the concourse of sailing-ships and steamers of all sizes is that of an actual forest. The place may well be called the grand emporium for the foreigners of all the seventeen countries of the West.

23rd. A beautiful day. At 1 p.m. went on board the French steamer Labourdonnais. This vessel is 276 feet long, 30 feet beam, and 18 feet deep. Her capacity is 2,000 tons, of which space her machinery occupies the greater part, taking up 1,200 tons, which leaves only 800 tons for cargo. She carries a captain and 11 officers, 30 seamen, 40 engineers and firemen, 15 stewards, and 6 cooks, making in all 103 persons. There are 40 cabins on board, each accommodating 3 or 4 passengers. The dining-saloon is abaft the mainmast, where a dining-table 60 or 70 feet in length is arranged, giving room for 30 or 40 persons. The utensils of every kind are kept in the highest condition of neatness and cleanliness. Abundance and elegance characterize the service of meals: the dishes are all in the foreign style of cookery, but the majority are highly palatable. After dark the saloon is brilliantly lighted up. There are 15 cabins on either side, and in each cabin two glass lamps are

^{*} This is the point where the Yang-tsze-kiang falls into the sea.

inserted, beside a large toilet-glass, in which the lights are gorgeously reflected. Entering this apartment, one is dazzled with the radiance, and bewildered as though lost in a palatial maze.

Forward of the mainmast are the engine-room and the gallery, with a long passage running on either side, upon which doors open, above each of which a lamp is hung. These are the cabins of the officers and the second-class passengers, numbering forty or fifty in all. The whole is brightly lit up at night. In addition to this, there are galleys, closets, &c., to the number of ten or a dozen separate apartments, all in the highest degree neat and well arranged. The captain studies charts, by which he ascertains localities and distances, and fixes the course and position of the ship by means of astronomical observations. Beside this, there are five compasses on deck, each of which is attended to by two men, for regulating the course of the ship. Soundings are taken by means of a lead, and the rate of speed is ascertained through the agency of a log-line. All other devices in use, such as for ascertaining the temperature or the state of the weather, as also for making sail and moving the rudder, are marvellously skilful. The vessel pursues her course unceasingly day and night; meals are spread in profusion, as though in the heart of a city; and one might think oneself living on shore, so little is there to give the impression of being on a journey. What is most noteworthy of all is that, whereas fresh water is a prime necessary at sea, on board steamers water is obtained through the agency of fire. The motive power of steam is employed to propel the ship, and the steam is then utilized and converted into water for use. Iron pipes are carried all over the ship, through which the water is conducted; and, with hundreds of persons on board, there is no danger of the supply being deficient for drinking or for purposes of ablution.

24th. Got under way at 5 A.M. At 10 A.M. passed out of the river and headed for the south.

27th. At 8 a.m, reached Hong Kong, the rugged peaks of which were visible from a long distance. The entrance to the harbour is many miles in length, and the appearance of the place, with its ranges of buildings scattered up and down the mountain slope, is in complete contrast to that of Shanghai. At 10 a.m. shifted to another steamer, named the Cambodye, a three-decked vessel.

28th. A fine warm day. At noon three or four of the officers took observations of the sun by means of instruments, and affirmed that during the 20 hours elapsed since our departure we had run 735 li (245 miles). This night the moon shone brilliantly, and the deep-green sea was perfectly still. Leaning against the bulwarks, and gazing into the far distance, I mused tranquilly with far-reaching aspirations.

29th. A fine day. Rose at 5 A.M., and saw the mists of the ocean assuming countless fanciful shapes as the sun rose above the horizon. At noon it was ascertained by observation that we had run 1,207 li in the past twenty-four hours, and that we were only 1,180 li from Saigon. Since

nine o'clock, the mountains and islands of the coast of Cochin-China have been in sight, extending to the westward of us at a distance of about thirty miles. The heat has been intense to-day, and punkahs have been put up on board. Fifteen men are employed in pulling them, and they produce a constant current of air above the seats. Although more than one hundred persons sat down to meals, no inconvenience from heat was felt.

4th. Sailed at 9 A.M. At noon the sky grew overcast, and for the first time a little coolness was experienced. Towards night a heavy thunderstorm came on, but the vessel continued her course as though nothing were the matter. Nothing but a steamship could have done this.

April 9th. At 3 P.M. anchored at Ceylon.

10th. At 7 P.M. the steamer put to sea. Upwards of 170 additional passengers have come on board, and she is crowded to the utmost degree. There are twenty-seven nationalities represented on board, speaking seventeen different tongues, and every man differs from his neighbour in personal appearance and costume. Some were long and lanky, others enormously stout; some with whiskers growing up to the roots of their hair, and long locks dangling loose in the wind. The robes these people wore were for the most part of gaily-tinted cottons, resembling the dresses worn by actors in our melodramas, and others again looked like Tibetan lamas about to perform the ceremony of exorcism. The effect produced was very striking and new. The natives of the various European countries, on the other hand, bore an air, in general, of elegance and refinement, and their wives and daughters also were good-looking and attractive. The ladies' costumes, of light silks and gauzy materials, were in particular of the most elegant description. Of a morning they walked arm-in-arm upon deck, or lay down upon couches made of rattan, their husbands waiting upon them all day long, attending like slaves to every beck and call. After breakfast and dinner [the husbands and wives] would walk up and down arm-inarm for a hundred steps or so, and when tired would lie down on a couple of chairs drawn close together. The noise of conversation was like that of the twittering of swallows in the eaves, or of a flock of waterfowl alighted for repose. Thus the day slips by in idleness, but without ennui.

16th. Among the passengers on board we had a Mohammedan from India, who was bound on a pilgrimage to the tomb of the founder of his faith, in the Turkish dominions, but since coming on board he has been confined to bed by illness, and this morning he was gathered to rest. When passengers die on board ship, their corpses are weighted with stones and cast into the sea. The captain, on examining the effects of the deceased, found a will, bequeathing 40,000l. to his son, whose place of residence was mentioned. I felt much emotion on hearing of the occurrence. Mr. Hart * asked me to compose some poetry, and I indited

^{*} This is the first mention Pin makes of his travelling companions from China. The gentleman above named was the patron to whom Pin owed his nomination for the journey; and he was accompanied, besides, by two interpreters from the Customs service, Messrs. Bowra and Deschamps.—Trans.

a stanza in pentameter verse. Toward midnight we passed an island, near which, I was told, sudden and unaccountable gales often spring up. From Hong Kong to this point I have travelled tens of thousands of li across the boundless ocean, but wind and waves have been propitious and calm, and I have been able each day to make my notes in the full-formed character. All my fellow-travellers have suffered, and as for myself the enjoyment of such comfort on this mission, taking me for the first time in my life upon the seas, can be due to no other cause than the favouring fortunes of the Sacred Son of Heaven!

18th. Arrived at Aden at noon. On the right hand a range of mountains extends for many miles, through which an entrance is formed resembling a gateway, and the vessel takes up her anchorage in a land-locked harbour. The hills are rugged and fantastic in outline, showing mile after mile of precipitous peaks, all utterly devoid of vegetation. On shore there are a dozen or so of mud-built houses, occupied as barracks for the English troops, and for storing coal for the use of the ocean steamers. The distance from Ceylon to this point is 6,400 and odd li, and without a settlement of this kind there would be a difficulty in coaling and watering vessels. It is for this reason that the British have stationed troops at this spot, commanding the highway from east to west, and made it a depôt for necessaries. The undertaking is a highly useful one. The place itself, however, produces absolutely nothing. Everything that is required in the way of live stock, provisions, and coal has to be imported from abroad Sailed at 11 P.M.

22nd. A fine day. Our run at noon was 729 li. At 3 P.M. sighted a lofty tower rising in the midst of the sea. On approaching, saw that it is built in seven stories, and rises to a height of more than 100 feet. It is constructed of iron, and a red flag is displayed on the summit. One of the persons on board told me that this building is placed where it stands in order to mark the position of a shoal. Persons are stationed within, who hoist a flag when a vessel comes in sight, and display a light after dark, in order that navigators may be warned to keep at a distance. This is, indeed, a most excellent undertaking.

24th. Anchored at Suez shortly after midnight. Rose at 4 A.M., and at 6 A.M. we were transferred, with our luggage, to a small steamer, which conveyed us a distance of three or four miles to the landing-place. Went to the hotel, a building with lofty and handsome rooms. Tables were spread in four rows, giving seats for 150 persons, and meals are served precisely as on board the steamer, except that wine has to be paid for as ordered. While we were breakfasting, loud sounds of music were heard. The performers were eight in number, male and female, and the instruments upon which they played were of very singular forms, but the music was not unpleasing. I found, on inquiry, that these persons were Germans. Three of the women passed round the tables with glass dishes in their hands, and each guest gave them one or two pieces of silver money. A number of airs having been played, the women sang. Their voices were pure and well-modulated, and the effect produced was really agreeable.

The music was kept up for a couple of hours or more. At 3 P.M. we took our places in the railway-train. The vehicles in front comprise the engine, burning coal and putting the wheels in motion by means of the water contained [in the boiler]; and to this the remaining carriages are attached in succession, to the number of thirty or forty, as the case may be. Each carriage is like the room of a house, and is divided into three compartments, to each of which there is a door. On entering, seats are found ranged along either side, each seat giving room for eight or nine persons. Above and below the seats there are spaces where some dozens of articles of passengers' luggage can be stowed away. Each compartment has six glass windows, to keep out the draughts and glare of the sun; they can be opened and closed at will. The carriages are handsomely painted, and fitted with well-filled, luxurious cushions. One can sit or lie down, eat and drink, get up and look out right and left, exactly as one chooses. The carriages next in order convey the luggage, and those last of all accommodate several camels and horses. The train does not start until after a bell has been rung three times. For the first few paces the motion is gradual and easy, but after this it becomes like "the speed of a galloping horse, whom no one can stop." The houses, trees, hills, and roads by the side of the train fly past so swiftly that they are scarcely perceived by the eye. After a time the train stops, and in the village by the roadside there is a building, to which all the passengers, male and female, repair to purchase refreshments. The master of the establishment is a Mohammedan, and on the walls there are painted images of Buddha, and sundry [figures of] dragons and other monsters, huge fishes, and wild beasts are hung up all over the place, together with five or six pictures in frames, representing Chinese theatrical scenes. After taking refreshment, we again got in motion, under the light of a brilliant moon. After travelling for another couple of hours, towards 8 P.M. groves of trees began to show themselves by the wayside, and houses to become more and more frequent. We were approaching Cairo, the capital of Egypt. In four hours we had effected a land journey of 278 li (93 miles). Proceeded to the inn, which was brilliantly lighted up, with meals ready prepared. The apartments were neat, and beautifully arranged. Retired to rest at midnight. At length, after a sea voyage of a month's duration, I am on shore again, and able, for the first time, to undress.

25th. At 4 a.m. packed up some provisions, and having engaged a carriage drove out in a north-westerly direction. After driving for three or four miles crossed a small river. My companions hired six donkeys, which they put to speed on reaching the further bank. The donkeys are very fine animals, and would outrun a horse. A distance of three or four miles farther on we arrived at the tombs of the ancient kings, of which there are three in close proximity to each other. The tomb lying to the north is of immense size. According to the descriptions given of it, it occupies an area of five li, and its summit attains an altitude of 500 feet; and this I believe to be no exaggeration. The structure is

square below and rises to a point (pyramidal), and is entirely composed of blocks of limestone. The larger blocks measure perhaps five or six feet in height by seven or eight feet in breadth. On the north face there is a cavernous passage winding into the interior, through which visitors are led by the native guides, waving lights in front. In the narrowest places there is barely room for a man to pass. The passage winds from side to side, now up and now down, in the densest obscurity, and with many steep and dangerous inclines. In the centre a stone trough is met with, which, on being struck, gives forth a ringing sound. This is said to be an ancient sarcophagus. The [vault] where the passage debouches is upwards of 100 feet in height, and here, on a slab of stone, there is an inscription in ten columns, comprising about 100 characters, resembling those of the ancient bells and vases (found in China). About one-third of the inscription can be distinguished, but the remainder has perished under the corroding influences of time, and is wholly undecipherable. Some connoisseur should take a rubbing of the characters and bring it to China for the purpose of instituting a minute comparison with the inscriptions of our own ancient monuments in stone and bronze. They might then be deciphered without difficulty, and the period from which they date be accurately ascertained. Although inscriptions also exist on both sides of the internal passage, both above and below, still the characters here seen all belong to the European alphabets; and that the one above referred to actually dates from the period of the Three Dynasties in China,* and is no forgery, may be positively asserted. At the foot of the mountain (pyramid) there is a huge block of stone, chiselled in the form of a tank, apparently an unfinished labour of antiquity. Beside it a huge block stands upright, which is sculptured in the likeness of a head of Buddha, resembling the image at the Ta-fuh-sze (Grand Monastery of Buddha) at the Lake of Hang-chow. It is a sight worth seeing. The natives brought ancient coins and stone figures from the places of sepulture for sale to the visitors.

26th. Set out again at 9 a.m. Passed on the road two railway-carriages, gorgeously decorated with gilding, which were said to be the royal carriages. The train pursued a north-westerly course, and as the season was that of harvest the country presented a vast expanse of ripened grain, like yellow clouds. The method of reaping and gathering in the corn, of ploughing and harrowing, pursued by the peasants of the country, resembles in the main the system in China. The speed of the train was now greater than before, and the sensation was precisely that of flying through the air. At 2 p.m. we arrived at Alexandria, a distance of 489 li, and embarked on board a small steamer, which conveyed us to the Mediterranean boat. The latter took her departure immediately. She is smaller than the Cambodge, and somewhat differently constructed, but her saloon is of superior size. Three long tables are spread, which will accommodate 150 or 160 passengers, and windows open on either side, the spaces between being

^{*} The period extending from B.C. 2200 to B.C. 300.

occupied by fine paintings. The saloon is lighted at night by forty-four lamps, rivalling daylight in the illumination they produce.

Since leaving the Red Sea the temperature has grown cooler by degrees, and in the morning and evening warm clothing is necessary.

Some even put on furs.

May 2nd. At 1 P. M. arrived at Marseilles, where the Custom-house exempted our baggage from search. Took a carriage to the hotel. The streets are bustling and crowded, the houses all six or seven stories in height, with highly-decorated fronts and ornamental balconies, towering up into the very clouds. After darkness falls, the lamplight makes them as bright as by day, even in the lesser byways. No rambler by night need carry his own lantern in his hand! It is stated that the population amounts to 500,000 souls. There is an endless succession of streets, and the twinkling lights of the shops, crowded together like the stars of the firmament, present a spectacle such as the new-year's night illuminations elsewhere * cannot vie with either in beauty or extent. The splendour of the gas-lamps is a spectacle in itself. The hotel is seven stories in height, with a staircase in a spiral form; but in order to avoid the inconvenience of frequent ascents, there is, in addition, a small apartment, accommodating seven or eight persons, which by means of a large revolving wheel is hoisted to the top of the building. Each room is provided with a covered indicator of intelligence (bell), through which it is known at once in the office that attendance is called for in that particular room. For transmitting messages there is also a marvellous contrivance. All these devices are very wonderful. The bedding and furniture in general are all elegant in the extreme.

3rd. Went by railway to see the place where marine engines are manufactured, which lies at a distance of about thirty miles from the hotel, but the time occupied in the trip was barely over four hours. The train passed under ten or a dozen hills (through tunnels), of which five were of great length. These passages are all like deep caverns, some one and some two miles or so in length. The train whirls into pitchy blackness as it enters the tunnel, but every one of the carriages, some score or more in number, is lighted by lamps. After a few moments the daylight on the other side begins to appear, and we emerge once more. The vegetation in the open country was very pretty. The bridges and roads all in good repair. Wheat was just in the green ear. In the afternoon visited some gardens near the seashore. At 3 P.M. set out in the train and travelled a distance of 283 miles. It was only 8 P.M. when we arrived at our destination, Lyons, where the streets, resplendent with lamplight as if it were broad day, were even twice as bustling as at Marseilles.

7th. At Paris. The Custom-house passed our luggage without examination. The streets are bustling and gay, and in airiness and breadth are finer again than those of Lyons. I am informed that at the

^{*} i. e. in China.

latter place the population is 600,000, whilst at Paris it is upwards of 1,000,000. There are 300,000 troops [in the country], and in every street and thoroughfare [sentries] are seen stationed, clad in dark uniforms (lit.: black coats) with red trousers, standing erect with a weapon (staff) in their hands. There is a constant succession of police passing to and fro, all wearing bright new uniforms, not a single one in shabby or worn clothing! One unceasing rattle arises from the traffic of vehicles, and the multitudes of foot-passengers may be compared to swarms of ants; but all is tranquil, nevertheless, and no confusion prevails. Unquestionably, it is a land of politeness and good order.

8th. M. de Méritens, of the [Chinese] Customs (at home on leave), accompanied me to a public establishment where drawings were being made having reference to dwellings in the style of various countries about to be erected at Paris. Also went to a vast building of glass, 300 feet in height and large in proportion. It contains a countless number of fine paintings, very triumphs of pictorial art. After this, proceeded two or three miles to the westward, where the Government gardens stand. It is quite beyond my power to do justice to the rich display of botanical treasures, and the wonders of the animal kingdom, which are to be seen at this place; but what is most remarkable is that all the most curious among the scalv and finny tribes of the seas are reared in confinement here, separately lodged according to their species in glass compartments, accompanied by aquatic plants and marine rocks, presenting a complete tableau of the denizens of ocean! Some scores of rare specimens of crustacea are kept alive here in some twenty or thirty different compartments, and visitors are able to inspect most minutely these creeping things of the waters-a most remarkable sight indeed! In the evening I went to the theatre, which was not over until midnight. The subject of the play referred wholly to scenes of ancient times. The size of the stage (lit.: room) was such as to give space for 200 or 300 persons, with representations of natural scenery and houses or apartments changing and dissolving instantaneously. The eye is dazzled by the splendour of the gay costumes that are worn. Fifty or sixty females, actresses, made their appearance on the stage, of whom one-half were noticeable for good looks, the great majority being nude to the extent of half their persons, and took part in the performance as dancers. During the progress of the play, natural scenery accompanied by cascades, with the sun and moon, alternately shining and obscured, was represented, whilst figures of the gods or crowds of fairies were seen descending from on high, amidst a dazzling halo of light, forming an inconceivably marvellous spectacle. Those present in the theatre, to the number of more than a thousand, joined unanimously in applauding it by clapping their hands.

10th. Called upon the British and United States' Ministers, who are respectively stationed at Paris. In the evening went to a theatre to see equestrian performances, which I found superior to Chinese horse-racing. A female performer danced upon a horse's back, and while the animal was

racing at full speed she jumped through a hoop and alighted again upon the saddle. Another individual made a horse stand up and dance on his hind-legs; beside which there was an iron cage produced, larger than an ordinary room, which was rolled upon wheels into the arena, and in which five lions were confined. Their roaring boomed in the ear like the reverberation of a deep-toned bell. A man entered the cage and engaged in combat with these beasts, using a sword and rapier, and discharging a fire-arm. The angry roaring of the lions made every spectator hold his breath.

18th. Left the hotel about eight o'clock, and set off by train. After a journey of 210 miles, arrived by one o'clock at the port of Boulogne, where we embarked on board a steamer for a sea-transit of some 25 miles, arriving about 4 P.M. at the British port of Dover. Taking train again, travelled a further distance of 83 miles, and at 7 P.M. entered our hotel in London, the English capital.

19th. Mr. Hart, the Inspector-General of [Chinese] Customs, came to see me, and during the day I also received visits from Messrs. Dick, Hughes, and Hannen, of the Customs service, who spoke of the vast population of London, exceeding 3,000,000 souls, and of the insular position of the country, owing to which an army of some 100,000 men, and a navy numbering no more than 60,000 seamen, are sufficient for defensive purposes; quite unlike France, whose frontier on three sides adjoins that of neighbouring countries. In France, accordingly, a larger army is required, and in case of war some hundreds of thousands of men can be put in the field. The metropolis is fifteen miles in diameter, with a densely crowded population. The houses and other buildings present a fine appearance, and are, for the most part, four or five stories in height. The streets are clean, and absolutely thronged with vehicles and footpassengers. Of all cities of the West, this is by far the largest capital. The uniform of the military seen in the streets is a red coat and black trousers, perfect neatness prevailing in every part of their attire and equipments. The horses they ride are of imposing size. Each man patrols his beat unceasingly, with his weapon in his hand.

24th. Went to have my likeness taken. In the afternoon called upon the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Clarendon, and upon Mr. Hammond. Later, went to see an Academy,* where the portraits, figures, and landscapes exhibited display singular excellence in the art. The European newspapers have had the report as far back as two months ago that a Chinese commissioner was on his way, and numbers of persons consequently ask to see me and to have my likeness. At the establishment where I was photographed in Paris, crowds of people strove to get copies, and I am told that as much as fifteen francs were paid for a copy of the portrait. It has already been a source of great profit to the artist, just as with us, fans from the hand of a noted painter are sought after.

25th. Cloudy. Visited the great gardens [at Kew], where there are

^{*} Exhibition of the Royal Academy.

azaleas more than ten feet in height, and roses also as high as five or six feet, covered with blossoms, in vast profusion, forming a rich display of varied colour and fragrance. I was told that plants brought from China are tended here with care and successfully propagated. In general, the abundance and beauty of the floral display excels everything of the kind in Europe. The artificial water here is very fine, and the glass-houses and aviaries a most rare sight.

In the evening went to the Tea Gardens [Cremorne] and saw theatrical

displays, divinely wonderful beyond conception.

26th. Visited the Custom-house, where the annual receipts, I learn, amount to 26,000,000?. sterling. Also visited the tea-warehouses, containing three million chests of tea, all showing Chinese marks, beside one million barrels of wine, stored in underground vaults. These vaults are of great extent, and we burnt out ten or more candles before our visit was over. The atmosphere is powerfully impregnated with vinous exhalations, yielding an agreeable perfume to the senses. If Yüan Tseih * could be brought hither he would certainly exclaim: "Bury me here when I die, and spare yourselves the trouble of following me with a mattock!" Also visited the Mint, where gold, silver, and copper are coined by machinery, without manual labour,—a process singularly skilful and effective.

27th. Travelled into the country by train in a north-westerly direction, accomplishing a distance of thirty miles in three-quarters of an hour, to visit a camp of instruction [Aldershot]. Called upon the General in command, and afterwards witnessed divers military exercises. The soldiers' quarters occupy an area some three miles around, and 8,000 men are stationed here. The musketry-practice and manœuvres were executed with uniform precision. In the afternoon, lunched with the General.

28th. Visited the Zoological Gardens, and had a sight of tigers, leopards, bears, lions, elephants, serpents, dragons, and denizens of the waters,—in fact, every kind of creature, with strange birds and monstrous fishes, such as, in very truth, "eye hath not seen nor ear heard." This is considered the most extensive menagerie in existence.

31st. Was invited to-night by the Minister of State, Earl Russell, to present myself to his lady, who was very gracious. There was a large gathering of ladies of rank and distinction, filling the rooms with gorgeous apparel. Some of the ladies played upon the piano and sang, making the air resound with vocal music, the effect of which was very pleasing. Methought Tung Shwang-ch'eng † had descended from the halls of fairy-land and come to London.

June 1st. Cloudy, and a slight drizzle. Visited the ancient cathedral

^{*} Yuan Tseih is one of the seven wine-bibbing worthies of Chinese history and romance. He died A.D. 263. As the professor of an epicurean philosophy, which ridiculed the formal ceremonies of the prevailing orthodoxy, he was accustomed to say, "Let me die drinking, and shovel me into my grave!"—Trans.

[†] This is the name of one of the fairy attendants of Si Wang Mu, the Titania of the Chinese.—Trans.

[Westminster Abbey], which rises to a height of 120 feet, supported by pillars of stone and vaulted arches of immense height. The workmanship is of the most elaborate kind, but it has suffered much from the ravages of time during its existence of upwards of 1,000 years. The ancient sovereigns and statesmen are interred within this edifice, and are represented by lifelike effigies in stone. About 4 p.m. visited the Houses of Parliament (lit: the hall of public deliberation), an edifice lofty and magnificent beyond compare. The various districts of the country elect 600 persons to deliberate [here] on public affairs. In the evening went to the theatre. The performance was inconceivably marvellous.

June 2nd. This morning visited Woolwich, eight miles distant to the south-west, where the brother of General Gordon is superintendent of the Arsenal, which he invited me to inspect. Lunched at his official residence, and composed a couple of sonnets in pentameter during the repast.

4th. A fine day. Visited what is called the Palace of Crystal, lying eight miles south of the metropolis. The palace stands on a hill, in a very lofty situation, and consists in two great halls, two-thirds of a mile high and a mile in breadth.* There is a tower at either end, that on the north being eleven stories in height, and 400 feet in altitude. The whole is constructed of glass, and when seen from a distance it glitters like one mass of crystal. In the interior, the dwellings and architecture of various countries are represented, with effigies of their respective inhabitants and birds and beasts. The director of the palace did the honours and led me through the whole place, and supplied me, besides, with a small carriage to obviate the necessity of walking. Within and without, brightness reigns on every side; and from the balconies a view extending over twenty miles of country is obtained. I was next invited to the building where guests are entertained—a smaller, three-storied edifice, elegantly fitted-up. The arcade leading to it is completely closed in with glass, and the covered ways surrounding [the house] were gay with purple creepers in full bloom. The peonies and azaleas were larger than those in China; and beside these flowers a variety of other plants were scattered here and there, forming, with the verdure with which the ground was carpeted, a lovely combination of divers hues. A lady offered us refreshments (lit.: tea and wine), and brought out books of pictures for our inspection. Our reception here was exceedingly hospitable.

5th. Cloudy. At 10 a.m. set out by rail for Windsor Castle, the Queen's country palace, about seventeen miles off. The edifice is lofty and of great extent; it is said, indeed, to contain 3,600 (?) separate apartments, and is, in all, of three stories in height. It may well be said, therefore, to be a structure of "broad halls and countless chambers." A custodian of the palace acted as our guide through the various apartments, which contain a great abundance of precious objects. I noticed

^{*} Some confusion seems to exist here between the palace and the hill on which it stands.—Trans.

a vase of green jade-stone,* six or seven feet in height, covered with the richest veinings, resembling the plumage of a peacock, and dazzlingly lustrous. This I was told was a present from the sovereign of Russia. It does not yield the palm, in good sooth, to the "coral branch seven feet long." Beside this, various rooms are set apart for precious articles from different countries, all separately arranged, and among the number I noticed a volume of botanical drawings, and a fan inscribed with three heptameter stanzas from the poems entitled Liu Hiang Tseih, both of which I recognized as Chinese. The walls of the palace are hung with paintings by celebrated masters, and in richness and elegance of its furniture and decorations it stands at the head of everything in the West. The park embraces an area of ten miles in circuit, and the honour was done me of placing a carriage and horses from the royal stables at my disposal for a drive through the domain. Some of the trees are of stupendous size, and are more than a century old. The prospect is diversified by gently undulating hills, and by winding rivulets and streams, amid which the belling of the deer is heard mingling with a flood of melody from feathered songsters. The most delicate and exquisite kinds of flowers are cultivated in glass houses, with windows which may be opened and shut at pleasure to guard them against the effects of wind or sun. The superintendent of the gardens informed me that in consequence of the coldness of the climate this precaution is necessary, and without it the plants would be killed by frosts. Taking a walk inside this building I was charmed by the rich display of colour and gratified by the subtle perfumes exhaled around. Among the flowers which I recognized were specimens of the Cydonia Japonica, some two or three feet in height, of most symmetrical beauty. The red and white camellias resembling those grown in the province of Kiangsi, the roses, azaleas, peonies, tulips, &c., were all double the size of what we have in China. I also visited the fruit-houses, which are similarly constructed. Here some score or more of buildings are occupied with peaches, plums, and almonds, beside graperies. In all these places, it appears, hot water is laid on in brass pipes, which maintain an equable warmth in the building, resembling the temperature which prevails in China towards the end of spring. Of the fruit-trees, some were just flowering, others only just in bud, some with the fruit formed and others again in full bearing, thus providing, as I was informed, a constant succession of fruit for use as required. A bunch of purple grapes was plucked for me, the clustering fruit of which equalled birds' eggs in size, but fully ripe, and of most exquisite flavour.

In the stables [I saw] the royal horses, some of which stand eight feet in height. There are also eight small carriage-ponies, resembling the ponies of the west of China, which are driven by the Queen herself. The high carriage in which I was driven whirled along with the rapidity of lightning.

^{*} Malachite is probably meant.—Trans.

and in a couple of hours I had traversed every corner of the domain. I was reminded of the verse in Li Ch'ang-ke's poems, where he says:—

In the favouring airs of Spring, swift my courser speeds his way! All the blooming sights of Ch'ang-ngan* I will witness in a day!

I also visited the great college (Eton), where the director of studies invited me to partake of refreshments. On returning in the evening, I dined by invitation with the Marquis (or Earl) M——, at his public residence, where a feast of the most recherché character was given; and towards midnight I proceeded to the same nobleman's private residence, where a great gathering of ladies, not less than from one to two hundred, was assembled. The lady [of the house] was stationary in the midst of a forest of gorgeously apparelled guests, and the introductions left not a moment's leisure.

6th. Early this morning an officer of the palace sent a card stating he was commanded by the Queen to invite [us] to a State ball and banquet, specifying half-past ten o'clock P.M. as the time. The officers accompanying me and the interpreters were to go also, and dresses of ceremony were worn [by the interpreters] with swords. Our preparations were not completed until evening, and at the appointed time we proceeded together to the palace. On alighting from our carriage at the gateway we saw some hundred or more of troops under arms, and drawn up in rank. They were all dressed in scarlet. After passing through the doorway we discerned a line of officers, drawn up, erect and motionless, holding halberds in their hands. At each doorway four of these were stationed. After entering, and turning to the left, we traversed a long corridor, making four or five turns. The whole was flooded with a blaze of light, the marble pavements richly carpeted, and both sides of the staircase lined with flowering plants in bloom, the perfume from which impregnated the entire atmosphere. The lamps shone with such splendour that not a nook or cranny was left unilluminated. The flight of stairs we ascended numbered more than a hundred steps, and was crowded with a continuous stream of ladies of rank proceeding to the presence-chamber. It is the ceremonial usage that a court is held by the Queen twice during each month. Following our guide, we passed through one room after another, until at length we reached the ball-room. The size of this apartment is about fifty or sixty feet † in breadth by more than one hundred in length. It is, moreover, upwards of fifty feet in height. From the ceiling, and on all sides of the room, there are hung lamps with glass shades, to the number of 8,560 (?) burners altogether.

Of late years, the Queen has held but few receptions, and the heirapparent and his consort have been commissioned to discharge on her behalf the courtesies of State entailed by foreign intercourse. There

^{*} One of the most celebrated among the ancient capitals of China.-Trans.

[†] If the writer is reckoning by Chinese measurement, this passage should read, "seventy or eighty feet," as the *chang* of ten Chinese feet is equal to fourteen feet English.—Trans.

were present at court this evening four hundred of the nobility and high functionaries of the Government, besides eight or nine hundred ladies of rank and position. The Prince and Princess sat facing the south, with seats arranged on either side of them, in three gradations. All the guests in attendance may stand or sit down as they please. I had a place opposite together with my companions. A band was stationed in a gallery, and the male and female guests went through some ten or a dozen dances. Officers of the army were in scarlet uniforms, and civilians in black coats, in all cases ornamented with gold embroidery. The ladies wore dresses of a variety of colours, red, green, &c., with bare shoulders, arms, and bosoms. They wore clusters of jewels and diamonds upon their heads-a gorgeous array of ornament literally dazzling to the sight! This spectacle is the ne plus ultra of elegance, luxury, and abundance! At midnight the Prince and Princess left their seats and repaired to another saloon, when the whole assemblage stood still, forming ranks on either side. Shortly afterwards a palace official brought word that the Prince had invited me to see him, and I forthwith went [to be introduced]. The Prince and Princess both stood up, and put questions to me, such as-What did I think of the appearance of this country? It was a pity China is so far off, so that travelling backward and forward is not easy; had I enjoyed a comfortable voyage? Was I pleased with my visit to the Royal park yesterday? The Princess asked me how the climate of China was in comparison with that of England; and whether I had been pleased with the places I had seen. To all these questions I made answer, in addition to which I also said:-"Envoys from China have never as yet reached your honourable country; and now having been ordained to travel abroad, I have learnt for the first time that such beautiful lands exist beyond our seas. Moreover, by the extremely gracious welcome accorded to me by the Queen and your Royal Highness, I feel honoured in an unparalleled measure." Hereupon the Prince and Princess, both smiling, permitted me to withdraw, for the purpose of proceeding to the banqueting-room, where a profusion of costly wines and elegant viands was laid out. The servitors of the entertainment, decked in gold lace, carried trays about, moreover, and handed refreshments to the guests. I almost fancied I had been transported bodily to the Lake of Gems in heaven, that the crowd around me were the golden-armoured Gods, or the Immortals of fairy-land,* and that I had bid farewell to the world below!

A message came shortly with the Queen's commands that I should repair to the palace on the following afternoon to be presented to her Majesty. It was near morning when I got back to the hotel.

^{*} In the above complimentary outburst, the narrator ingeniously combines the various Chinese and Buddhist legendary ideas of celestial magnificence into one picture. The Lake of Gems is the fabled abode of the "Queen of the Fairies," Si Wang Mu; the golden-armoured Gods are the attendants of India in the Buddhist pantheon; whilst the immortals are part of the Taoist mythology.— Trans.

7th. A fine day. At about 3 P.M. I arrived at the palace gateway. Guards were drawn up inside and out the same as last evening, with the addition of a band numbering some scores of performers, clad in scarlet uniforms. A palace official, decorated with gold lace, led me to an apartment where I seated myself to await the summons to the Royal presence. At three o'clock several officers of the Household made their appearance, and led me through one door after another into the presencechamber. The Queen was standing facing the doorway, and on entering the apartment I drew myself up in a respectful attitude, and offered an expression of homage (lit.: of grateful feelings). The Queen asked me how long I had been in this country—and how I liked what I had seen, everything being so different from the manners and customs of China. I replied, saying that I had already been here a fortnight, and that in what I had seen of the buildings of London, and the various kinds of machinery in use, the skill and excellence of workmanship displayed were in advance of China, whilst, in respect to matters of government and administration, I had found much to admire. I added that I felt honoured beyond measure by the gracious treatment vouchsafed to me by the Queen, through which I had been enabled to enjoy the sight of her beautiful The Queen deigned to reply saying that she hoped after my return to China, on the termination of my travels, the concord and amity prevailing between the two countries might be still further increased. I bowed profoundly, testifying my homage, and withdrew.

I cannot help feeling that for a mere traveller like myself to have been favoured with repeated manifestations of distinguished courtesy, and to have had an interview vouchsafed and condescending expressions addressed

to me, is an honour of the very highest degree.

8th. Cloudy. Left the hotel at half-past 9 a.m., and at 10 o'clock took the train and travelled sixty miles northward to Oxford, where I visited several great colleges. An elegant luncheon was laid before us; and at 3 p.m. we went on to Birmingham, another journey of sixty miles. It is the custom in England for each town to elect an individual as director of the local affairs, like the "prefects" in our own ancient system. There was here a [gentleman] named Y——, occupying the office in question, who, having heard I was to visit the place, received me with great attention, invited me to dinner, and accompanied me on a tour through all the manufacturing establishments.

13th. Arrived at London at 5 a.m. The streets begin to be familiar, and on returning to our previous lodgings in Cha-urh-sze Sze-ti-li-ti (Charles Street), the landlady of the (United) Hotel and the attendants all welcomed us like old acquaintances. The flowers in the vases looked smilingly at the guests, and the bird in its cage chirruped its note of recognition. Truly is it said in Tu Yew's poems:

K'iüan ying tsêng suh k'êh.

(The dog goes forth to greet the stranger who has once slept in the house).

Our rooms are on the third story, and are tolerably lofty and airy.

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The dining-room is an elegantly furnished apartment, different from the one we first occupied. This hotel ranks as one of the second class, yet it is five stories in height, with some dozens of rooms on each floor. At night, it is brilliantly illuminated, not a single landing or winding gallery left unprovided with a flood of light, which is continued throughout the whole night. There are some ten or more large dining-rooms, and upwards of 130 bedrooms. In every apartment there is a means of communication for summoning attendants fixed on the wall. By pressing this with the finger, it is made known immediately in the office that a servant is summoned to such-and-such a room on such-and-such a floor. In the bath-room there are two brass pipes, from which the water flows. One pipe furnishes hot water, the other cold, the quantity of which may be regulated at pleasure. In all these arrangements, all establishments are fitted up alike.

14th. Fine. Settled the dates for our journey to Holland and other countries. The Secretary of State, Ka (the Earl of Clarendon), invited me to an interview with him in the afternoon, when, in addition to other conversation, he stated that the Queen had spoken approvingly of me, and also that, being aware I was about to visit other countries, he had been good enough to send communications notifying the fact, in order that wherever I went I might find hospitable entertainers. This is kindness and attention for which one should certainly feel grateful. Went next to the Earl of T.'s, where a large party of distinguished guests were invited, and where the lady of the house treated me with the utmost hospitality. After a time we repaired to the garden, and looked on while the lady visitors played at ball (croquet), during which time music was discoursed by a band. The assemblage of elegant toilettes was truly a a sight to behold!

20th. Rain. The Duke of P. invited us to a public assembly to witness a ball. The number of guests of both sexes was considerable (lit.: exceeded several tens). All the officials present wore their court uniforms, the same as at the palace entertainment. It was 2 A.M. when I got back to the hotel. The majority of the guests, it was stated, were Scottish, and of the ladies two or three in every ten had white hair, though their faces were youthful and blooming. In answer to my inquiries I was told that the hair was artificially whitened. One not conversant with the fact might almost have taken youthful matrons for grandmothers!

22nd. Mr. B. of the Crystal Palace invited us to see the fountains. The landscape, scenery and grottoes which they went through with us were very pretty sights. Returned home after a dinner in the evening. It was close upon midnight when we got back. On this day we saw a native of the province of Hu-peh, not more than three feet high, and also a man from Ngan-hevei, eight or nine feet in height—both remarkable specimens of humanity. A foreigner has brought them for a tour in this country.

23rd. Fine. At 9 A.M. embarked on board a steamer and left port for Holland.

The Cheatre in Mediabal Paris.

AUTHORITIES are not agreed as to the source of the modern theatre. Some derive it from the Greeks of the Lower Empire; others assert that the idea of instructing the people in Bible story by means of dramatic representations was suggested to the mediæval Churchmen by the study of Plautus and Terence; and many attribute the origin of moralities and mysteries to the pilgrims. The poorer of these bien heureux faisceants (blessed idlers), as an old author terms them, were, say they, in the habit of helping themselves along by singing rude rhymes descriptive of the lives and actions of the saints. And, they add, these rhymes gradually grew into a kind of drama, which the pilgrims found it profitable to exhibit at the church-doors. These opinions may be all equally true, or equally false. For the drama is one of those matters that spring up spontaneously when society has attained a certain position. The Spanish conquerors of America, for instance, found something similar to a drama among the Mexicans and Peruvians. So did the early navigators among the Pacific islanders. And certainly none of these peoples had ever dipped into Plautus or Terence, or taken a hint from the Byzantines.

Of one thing, however, there cannot be a doubt-the mediæval theatre in its origin was exclusively religious. Its first dramas, the Mysteries, were not exactly such wretched things as they are generally described. Critics persist in appraising them by the dialogue alone, which is unfair; and even this dialogue they judge in a partisan spirit, which is still more unfair. It may be admitted, indeed, that the dialogue of the Mystery was far from being perfect; that, in fact, it treated sacred things with a great deal of freedom, and that it frequently included very objectionable scenes. Three such are now before us. One of them purporting to represent the crucifixion reproduces with unquestionable fidelity the ribaldry that rioted round the ordinary gibbet in that age of superlative coarseness and cruelty. Another introduces Satan reproving his baffled imps, who retort in similar and thoroughly diabolical strain. And the third depicts the First Person in the Trinity as interrogated and replying in terms that we hesitate to cite, even in the original antique French. Within the narrow compass of six lines, or thereabout, the author contrives to be as offensive as he possibly could be to modern notions of propriety. He reduces heaven to the level of the mob, and causes its tenants to think and speak precisely as the small traders and artificers of his day. But this kind of thing was the least portion of the dialogue; and the dialogue itself, though sufficiently lengthy-often numbering 50,000, 60,000, and even 70,000 lines—was the least portion of the Mystery.

The scenery, the machinery, and the grouping of the characters were matters much more studied and admired. Indeed, the Mystery was always and emphatically what those who delighted in it termed it by preference-a spectacle; and, after due consideration, we feel bound to add, a magnificent one. It was seldom got through in less than three days—we have seen the programme of one that occupied twenty—and the actors formed quite an army. We have counted 189 different characters in a single piece, and the number was frequently larger. Nor was this at all extraordinary. The subject seldom ranged over less than the four Gospels or half-a-dozen books of the Old Testament, and the playwrights considered themselves at full liberty to add as many characters and as much incident as they pleased. Then the scenery was a show in itself. It represented everything from paradise to pandemonium, was thoroughly substantial, skilfully designed, and carefully finished to the smallest particular. As much may be said of the properties and the machinery. There were serpents that wriggled by clockwork and monsters that vomited flame; one of the latter being described as a great red dragon, with eyes of polished steel, that leapt upon the stage and disgorged quite a stream of lively little demons. There were many-coloured fires, abundant squibs, and even clouds that floated in and burst with what Leigh Hunt calls "a thunderous smother." As to the acting, that, too, was all spectacle. There was a great deal of dancing of a complicated character,-every dance being supposed to tell a story and convey a moral. There was a great display of agility, much singing, more nudity, and an infinity of sensational situation. Every group, too, was arranged with a care that extended to all the adjuncts. And thus the various scenes of the Mystery formed as many living pictures, which furnished excellent models to the painters of the era, and doubtless did much to produce the rapid progress and early perfection of their art.

Such was the Mystery in its prime: that is, when exhibited by the guilds as the principal feature of their holiday revels. On these occasions, which coincided with the greater festivals of the Church, it was usual for several guilds to unite in the production of the show. This, it will be understood, was an undertaking involving much time and trouble, and not a little expenditure. And here we may remark that the Mystery was popular for reasons apart from its scenic attractions. It was looked upon as stimulating trade, and therefore expected by the working-classes and encouraged by the authorities, who seldom objected to aid its conductors by a grant from the municipal funds. The wealthier classes also contributed liberally to the exhibition, to which spectators were admitted gratis down to the close of the fourteenth century. Then the confraternity of the Passion, a permanent theatre, and money-takers at the doors, made their appearance together.

Early in 1398 a number of Parisian citizens undertook to play the mystery of the Passion, which meant the whole Gospel history, "for the good of their souls, and the glory of the faith"—and a trifling remunera-

tion: two sous a head,-at St. Maur, two leagues from the metropolis. The speculation succeeded, and the company reaped a rich harvest. The prévôt of Paris, however, startled by such an unheard-of proceeding, lost no time in issuing a proclamation forbidding any resident within his jurisdiction to attend the exhibition without the licence of the King. The Parisians grumbled but obeyed, and the receipts of the players diminished enormously. Thereupon, the latter hied to court and laid the case before the throne. Fortunately for them, the monarch of the day, Charles VI., was precisely the man to enter heart and soul into such a controversy. The better to decide it he visited the spectacle, and was so well satisfied that in November, 1402, he issued letters patent granting the players full liberty to ply their craft in Paris, and even to appear in the streets in full theatric costume. The latter was a very necessary permission-indispensable, indeed, before the introduction of bill-posters. And for many a year after the actors were accustomed to preface their performances by marching through the streets with a drum beating before them, pausing at convenient corners to announce the piece for the day and to eulogize its merits. Thus victorious, the players hastened to place themselves beyond prévôtal reach for the future, and to secure a monopoly of the Paris theatre, by forming themselves into a guild duly chartered. And taking their name from the piece to which they owed their prosperity, they dubbed themselves in true mediæval style-"'The Confraternity of the Masters, Governors, and Brothers of the Passion and Resurrection of Our Lord." They had little difficulty in finding a suitable edifice. There were then numerous hospitals in Paris, most of which, being intended for persons of peculiar occupation or for exceptional crises, were generally three parts empty; and in one or other of these the new brotherhood played its Mysteries until, towards the close of the century, it obtained possession, on lease, of the large hall of the Hospital of the Trinity. This apartment was well adapted for the players' purpose, being 130 feet long by 40 feet broad. And here, for the next forty years, they played on Sundays and holidays to crowded houses-charging their primitive price, two sous for admission. Their doors opened at 1 P.M. and closed at 5; and so popular were their entertainments, that the clergy very considerately altered the hour of vespers, in order that their flocks-and, as the spiteful added, themselves-might thoroughly enjoy them.

In the hands of the brotherhood of the Passion, to whom the guilds speedily abandoned it, the Mystery was very much abridged and lost the greater portion of its picturesque character. But its materials were still derived exclusively from the Bible; and as the gravity of the subject was no longer relieved by splendid show, the brotherhood endeavoured to render its entertainment attractive in another way by the liberal introduction of farce. There resulted as odd a mixture as it is possible to conceive. Patriarchs were made to chant drinking-songs, apostles to relate the pranks of their carnal days, and venerated characters to jest like the subjects of the "Grand Coesre," or King of the Beggars. This

state of things, however, was of no long duration. Sound knowledge, and its constant attendant reformation, were by this time vigorously at work, handling all things and changing most; among the rest the exhibition of the brothers of the Passion.

That body quitted the Hospital of the Trinity in 1542 for the Hôtel Flanders. There it brought out the Mysteries of the Apocalypse, of the Apostles, and of the Old Testament. All these were unusually licentious; that of the Old Testament so much so, that its representation was forbidden by the Parliament. King Francis, however, was appealed to by the brotherhood, and overruled the obnoxious decision. Of course everybody became eager to see the naughty play, and the hostility of the Parliament went far towards making the fortune of the guild. Among the more exalted spectators was Anthony, King of Navarre, who happened at the time to be passing through Paris. And as the only day he could spare to the sight happened to be neither Sunday nor holiday, the authorities issued a proclamation about three ells in length, permitting the brotherhood to play out of season for that time only. But the opposition of the Parliament was not altogether fruitless. While registering the order of the King, it managed to add a few seasonable regulations, - one running that no profane, licentious, or ridiculous scenes should be interwoven with the Mystery; and another, that the old prices of admission and hours of exhibition should at once be restored. For it appears that since their removal to the Hôtel Flanders, the brothers had increased the one and lengthened the other. With respect to the first of these regulations, the brotherhood paid little attention to the Parliament. That tribunal, however, was completely successful with the second, for the excellent reason that it carried the mob with it.

The Hôtel Flanders was pulled down in 1547, and the brotherhood found a final resting-place in the Hôtel de Bourgogne. But, simultaneous with this last removal, it ceased to play sacred dramas. That year an edict was published,* running substantially as follows:—It is forbidden to the brotherhood to play the Mystery of the Passion or any other holy mystery under penalty of fine, at the discretion of the authorities. The brotherhood is, nevertheless, to play any profane mysteries whatever, provided they be honest and lawful and without offence to anybody. Further, the Parliament forbids for evermore in the town and suburbs of Paris the representation of all games and mysteries, except in the name and to the profit of the said fraternity.

With this edict closed the mediæval period of the Paris theatre.

Previous to this the Fraternity of the Passion was not without rivals who deserve some notice. These were the students, the members of the Court of the Châtelet—corresponding to our Old Bailey—and the subjects of the Empire of Galilee and of the Kingdom of Basoche. Some of these bodies require a little explanation. The numerous clerks employed by

^{*} The Council of Trent, then sitting, had something to do with this edict,

the Government and the Parliament formed themselves into corporations at an early period. We find them regularly chartered and established by the close of the thirteenth century. Each body elected a president and other officers annually. The chief of the Government clerks bore the title of Emperor of Galilee, and the head of the scribes of Parliament that of King of Basoche. Each of these potentates had the power of deciding all differences that happened to arise between his subjects, and of punishing all crimes committed by them, even with death-or, as feudal language phrased it, possessed the right of high and low justice. The kingdom of Basoche was by far the more powerful of these mock realms. All the clerks of justice throughout France were members. It had the right of coining money, which, however, had no circulation beyond its own confines; enjoyed a considerable revenue, including a fixed proportion of all legal fines, and could bring a powerful force into the field on occasion. This was strikingly manifested during the reign of Henry II. A revolt taking place in Guienne the Basoche mustered its fighting men, 6,000 strong, sent them well equipped into the field, and maintained them there until the close of the campaign, during which this French edition of the "Devil's Own" did excellent service. The corporation of the Châtelet consisted of the town-sergeants, some 300 strong, of the clerks of the court, and of the lawyers who practised therein, and was of less moment. As to the students, we need not enlarge concerning them. All these bodies had their festal days-that of the Empire of Galilee being Twelfth Day; that of the Basoche, the first of May; and that of the Châtelet, the first Monday after Trinity. The University as a body arrogated Christmas and the Carnival; while the several colleges had their own peculiar fêtes in addition. All these holidays were marked by processions well provided with banners and music, and closing with a dramatic exhibition, which, in its turn, was not unfrequently supplemented by furious rioting.

The plays of the Civil service, as we may term the Galileans and Basocheans, were enacted in the great hall of the Palace of Justice. This Palace of Justice had been, up to the fourteenth century, the residence of the Kings. In the earlier days of the French monarchy the whole machinery of the government attended the sovereign whithersoever he went, and in Paris lodged under the same roof. But as time progressed, a kind of divorce—à mensa et thoro—became necessary; so the King removed from the island which is known as the city proper, and abandoned the old palace to the officers of the Government. The great hall of this palace, devoted of old to royal reception and revelry, and destroyed by fire in 1618, was a room of vast extent, measuring about 240 English feet in length by about 90 in width. Its roof was of wood. In the construction of such roofs the joiners of the Middle Ages took great pride and exhibited much skill, running their rivals in construction, the freemasons, a close race for the prize of artistic ingenuity: and the roof of the Palace of Justice was one of their masterpieces. Around the hall stood the statues of the French monarchs, from Pharamond downwards, and at one extremity extended the celebrated marble table. Here, at ordinary times, sat the three tribunals of the Army, the Navy, and the Woods and Forests; and on it the clerks exhibited their dramas. The clerks were not only the actors in these dramas, but to a large extent their constructors. Leaving Scriptural subjects to the Brotherhood of the Passion, and romance to another body, of which we shall say a word or two presently, they confined themselves to current events, which they dealt with after-that is to say, a long way after-the manner of Aristophanes. And the Merry Men of the Châtelet did much the same on a scaffolding erected in front of their very ancient tower. As to the students, they were an unruly body in all respects, and not least so in this; so they played just whatever they liked, wherever they liked, and however they liked, but always with so much of Aristophanes in their productions as to render them probably the most obnoxious of all to the authorities. This is saying a great deal; for in their theatrical character, Basocheans, Galileans, and Merry Men of the Châtelet were all eminently disagreeable to gentlemen, and ladies, too, in high position. Accordingly, we find that austere body, the Parliament, for ever interfering with their amusements, sometimes placing restrictions on them, sometimes forbidding them altogether, and always with equal non-effect. last fact greatly astonishes certain grave historians, but we cannot quite see why. The Parliament, quarrelling with the clerks and townsergeants, was a veritable house divided against itself. It might, indeed, issue its edicts, but as these edicts were, in this instance, directed against its own officers, the men usually employed in effecting arrest and inflicting punishment-for the executioner himself figured among the actors at the Châtelet-we cannot exactly understand how these edicts were to be executed. We are quite aware that there were numerous other independent authorities in Paris-eighteen or twenty of them, we believeeach exercising the right of high and low justice, and each maintaining its little army of officials. But the Parliament, to say nothing of the degradation, was not likely to establish an ugly precedent against itself and its superiority by begging assistance from any other power. Its quarrels, therefore, with the clerks were generally very bald as to result.

Among other peculiarities in the character of Louis XI. was a fondness for low fun. The "hundred merry tales" drawn up for his amusement, and which we believe to be the book referred to by Beatrice as the origin of Benedick's good wit, throws as much light on the qualities of this much abused man as graver writings. He was particularly partial to the theatre of the clerks, and so long as they spared himself and his measures he cared little how far their ridicule extended. So during his time—which, as it happened, was rather a long one—the amateurs enjoyed a very fair toleration. Nor did they neglect to use it, tickling the risibility of the mob to any extent, and sowing for themselves and their theatricals no end of animosity, which fructified in due season. The moment the presence of Louis ceased to enliven his good town of Paris

(we say this advisedly, for Louis, like Henry VIII., was a decided popular favourite) the Parliament and other people in authority speedily developed a strong opposition to the fun of their inferiors. On May 16, 1476, an edict appeared forbidding clerks and others to enact farces, follies, or moralities publicly at the palace, the Châtelet, or elsewhere, on pain of exile and confiscation of goods. We do not know what happened at the ensuing Christmas. We presume, however, that things went on as usual, and that considering the season, the authorities winked at the theatricals. On the succeeding 1st of May the Basocheans enacted their farce as if there existed no prohibition to the contrary. And the Parliament, with much apparent lenity, contented itself with renewing its edict and with threatening the "high and powerful sovereign of the Kingdom of Basoche," Jean l'Eveille-John the Wide-Awake-with a whipping in case of any fresh infraction of the law by his subjects. John the Wide-Awake, however, fully merited his name, for the law was broken remorselessly, and with perfect impunity to the end of his reign, and the same thing happened under the rule of his successors for just ten years more. On May 1, 1486, the Morality, as our fathers called it, or the Immorality as we may term it, took unusual liberties with the great, not sparing even the King, Charles VIII. This was not to be borne; so eight days after out came a royal warrant, and at its heels a body of men-at-arms, who laid hands on four of the most prominent actors and thrust them into the dungeons of the Châtelet, from whence they were speedily transferred to a building quite as strong, the Conciergerie. Here they had to pay five sous each as entrance-money, with a rent of two deniers a week for sleeping-room on the floor, and four deniers a night in addition if they desired a bed! The last was a heavy sum in the good old times, and as the amateur actors were men of no high condition, it is probable that they paid no more than they were compelled to pay, and contented themselves with the ordinary prison-fare, that is to say straw-when they could get it. This was not always; otherwise the following entry would not recur so frequently in the criminal registers of the Parliament: "We enjoin you (gaolers) to treat your prisoners with mildness and humanity, and to give them their due allowance of straw, water, and ecclesiastical consolation." Nor was the straw, when they got it, of the most agreeable description. We find that when the litter used instead of carpets in the royal palace was unfit for further use there, it was handed over to the hospitals; and these were not days when undue sympathy was wasted on the prisoner, or better treatment accorded to him than to the unfortunate. We are not informed in which of the dungeons the amateurs were confined; whether in "the pretty girl," "the shrew," "the Jordan," or "the glory;" but whichever it was, we may presume that they were very uncomfortably and even dangerously lodged. The gaol-fever was a constant resident at the Conciergerie. Nor could it well be otherwise, seeing that through the whole course of the good old times there is but one instance recorded of its dungeons having undergone a thorough scrubbing. This took place 29_5

in 1548 by solemn command of Parliament; and then only because the miserable place had become absolutely poisonous. The clerks, however, did not abide very long in durance. As clerks they enjoyed all the privileges of the clergy, and that zealous body at once went to work for their release with the energy peculiar to itself, and with such effect that the offenders were released before the end of the month. Louis XII. was even more favourable to the clerks and their pet amusement than Louis XI. His reign, indeed, was the golden age of amateur theatricals. Nor could he be induced to interfere with the exhibitions of the marble table, even though he was himself subjected to its ridicule under the character of Father Avarice. But in return for this licence, the theatre, as we shall see, did Louis some service. Hardly, however, had the "father of his people" breathed his last when the Parliament resumed its squabbles with the players, and this time with some effect. True, Francis I. was on the throne, and he was a jovial monarch who loved a good jest even at his own expense. But through the whole of his long and stirring reign Francis was hardly ever his own master. The real rulers were people whose character and conduct rendered them peculiarly amenable to satire; and therefore that dangerous kind of satire which struts before the world in sock and buskin was soon tightly muzzled. Restraint after restraint was applied to the amateur farces, until, in 1540, it was ordained that no piece should be played thereafter until it had been rehearsed before and received the approval of a select committee of the Parliament. And to make this censorship the more rigid, it was further ordained that even after rehearsal and approval the clerks should be compelled to make a formal request for permission to exhibit their farce. These regulations being strictly enforced did much towards extinguishing the theatric fervour of Basochean and Galilean. And the ensuing religious wars completed the work; for the moralities of the Palace of Justice were discontinued early in the strife and never afterwards resumed.

Up to 1547 the Confraternity of the Passion confined itself to heavy business. Still it was fully aware of the value of lighter pieces, and always made ample use of them. Much about the same time with itself (1400) appeared for the first time a body of itinerant players, which, eschewing morality and mystery, devoted its energies to the glorification of Farce. These gentry, who called themselves Enfans Sans Souci, or "Careless Lads," soon became very famous. As the brothers of the Passion had the monopoly of the Paris theatre, the "Careless Lads" could not play in the metropolis without their permission. This produced some bickering, and in no long time an arrangement between the rivals. The older company agreed not merely to license the exhibition of the new comers, but to grant them the use of their own hall on certain conditions. One of these applied to a division of profits, another stipulated that the comedians should spend a certain portion of the year in Paris; and a third, that on their return from the provinces they should enter the city "in triumph,"—that is to say, in full theatric costume, with drums beating and colours flying. Nor was this all. To fit it for fraternization with that august body-"the masters, governors, and brothers of the Passion of our Lord," the band of "Careless Lads" had to undergo a thorough reorganization. From that time forth it took the titles of the "Seigneurie de l'Engoulevent," and "Principauté de la Sottise," and was ruled by a lord and prince, who had his chancellor, guidon, herald, and robes of state,-all of properly ridiculous patterns,-the head-dress, for example, consisting in a fool's cap decorated with a monstrous pair of asses' ears. This body was duly recognized and chartered by the authorities, and, like most of the other burlesque kingdoms, enjoyed some very substantial privileges, the person of its prince being as secure from arrest for debt as the person of any other great lord in the realm. And these titles, dignities and privileges, he was to retain so long as he continued to make the aforesaid triumphal entry into the city. What this ceremony was may be conceived when we state that, on one occasion, it included "thirty great devils suitably caparisoned, who gambolled diabolically and threw fireworks liberally among the spectators." We need not say that this triumph eventually became notorious for low ruffianism, so offensive, in fact, that it had to be discontinued. And this led to decidedly the most singular lawsuit on record. But the affair lies within another theatrical period, and cannot now be noticed.

Personally, the Prince of Fools was not quite the man his office would lead us to believe. In nearly every instance he was fully as clever as he was comic; very fairly read, considering the era; and, stranger still, of some literary ability. Indeed, the writings of these potentates make a very respectable figure in old French literature. The most remarkable of them—that is, during the period we treat of—was Pierre Gringoire, Gringore, or Gringon, for his name is spelt almost as variously as that of Shakspeare. The younger son of a good Norman family, he entered the University of Paris, with the view of devoting himself to one of the learned professions. But long before he was qualified to take a degree he made a love-match, and was thenceforth compelled to live by his wits. Rather a difficult matter he found it for several years. He tried a good many things in turn, and failed at all, sometimes for lack of capital, but more frequently for lack of impudence. At length, somewhere about 1502, he cast in his lot with the Careless Lads, and soon rose to eminence among them. Here he produced farce after farce with remarkable success. and eventually realized a competence, with which he retired to the comparative privacy of a political essayist. His principal production as Prince of Fools was written by order of the King, and exhibited in 1511. It was the most remarkable of the political dramas occasionally enacted by the Careless Lads, and, as usual in such cases, was played at the Fish Market.* From beginning to end it was a bitter satire on the clergy, and

^{*} This piece is well deserving of study. A good analysis of it will be found in the Cours d'Eloquence Française de M. Gérusez, tome ii. p. 123.

never were clerical vices handled more ruthlessly. Indeed, the forthcoming Reformation, prolific as it proved in savage writings, produced nothing more ferociously virulent than this. It had little fable and less art. The characters satirized were merely brought upon the stage to recount all the evil that they had already done, and all the further evil that they meant to do, and that was all. Nevertheless, it was a great success, and did much to reconcile the people with anti-papal wars.

As to the non-political pieces produced by the Careless Lads, they consisted of farces and profane mysteries, which included tragedy and comedy. The farces consisted each of a few ludicrous situations borrowed from one of the popular stories. The comedies were much longer, and not at all more refined or original. Most of them, like Jodelle's Eugene, closed after the manner unfortunately not peculiar to Mrs. Behn. And with the addition of plenty of horror, and perhaps the subtraction of some of the grossness, the same description will apply to the tragedies. The Latin poets and the Italian novelists furnished the materials of both; the plots of three or four plays or of five or six stories being generally interwoven to compose a single drama. The mediæval playwright, indeed, did his best to atone for want of wit by multiplicity of incident; but not very successfully, in the view of competent judges. Amyot, in his version of Plutarch, alludes more than once to the "vileinement fait acte de bastelear ou de farceur sur un eschaffaut en plein theatre." And Montaigne shortly reviews and strongly condemns the composite fable and tedious dialogue of the Sephonisbes, Cleopatres, Didons, and Soltanes of Jodelle, St. Gelais, Bounyn, and Péruse. Montaigne, however, allows (Essays, ii. 10) that the acting was much superior, and that it frequently reconciled even his cultivated taste to the deformities and absurdities of the drama.

The mediæval theatre had its spiteful censors as well as its bad playwrights and good actors. One of these gentry—the Collier of his day—speaks of "that cloaque and house of Sathan the Hotel of Burgundy, whose actors, with shocking abuse of terms, designate themselves the Brothers of the Passion of Jesus Christ! That place," continued he, "is the scene of a thousand scandalous assignations. It is the bane of virtue, the destroyer of modesty, and the ruin of poor families. Long before the play begins it is thronged with artisans, who pass their time in gross badinage, card and dice playing, gormandizing and drinking, from which things result many quarrels and batteries. And what do they witness on the stage? A travestie of sacred rites, mock priests, laughable marriages, the cross and altar prophaned, and the words of the Gospel parodied and turned into ridicule; or, at the very least, a farce which is disorderly, indecent, and vile."

Monte Generoso.

The long hot days of Italian summer were settling down on plain and country when, in the last week of May, we travelled northward from Florence and Bologna seeking coolness. That was very hard to find in Lombardy. The days were long and sultry, the nights short, without a respite from the heat. Milan seemed a furnace, though in the great Duomo and the narrow shady streets there was a twilight darkness which at least looked cool. Long may it be before the northern spirit of improvement has taught the Italians to despise the wisdom of their forefathers, who built those sombre streets of palaces with overhanging eaves, that, almost meeting, form a shelter from the fiercest sun. The Lake country was even worse than the towns; the sunlight lay all day asleep upon the shining waters, and no breeze came to stir their surface or to lift the tepid veil of haze, through which the stony mountains, with their yet unmelted patches of winter snow, glared as if in mockery of coolness.

Then we heard of a new inn, which had just been built by an enterprising Italian doctor below the very top of Monte Generoso. There was a picture of it in our hotel at Cadenabbia, but this gave but little idea of any particular beauty: a big square house with many windows, and the usual ladies on mules, and guides with alpenstocks, advancing towards it, and some round bushes growing near, was all it showed. Yet there hung the real Monte Generoso above our heads, and we thought it must be fresher on its height than by the lake shore. To find freshness was the great point with us just then: moreover, some one talked of the wonderful plants that grew among its rocks, and of its grassy slopes enamelled with such flowers as make our cottage gardens at home gay in summer, not to speak of others rarer and peculiar to the region of the Southern Alps. Indeed, the Generoso has a name for flowers, and it deserves it, as we presently found.

This mountain is fitted by its position for commanding one of the finest views in the whole range of the Lombard Alps. A glance at the map shows that. Standing out pre-eminent among the chain of lower hills to which it belongs, the Lakes of Lugano and Como with their long arms enclose it on three sides, while on the fourth the plain of Lombardy with its many cities, its rich pasture-lands and cornfields intersected by winding river-courses and straight interminable roads, advances to its very foot. No place could be better chosen for surveying that contrasted scene of plain and mountain, which forms the great attraction to the outlying buttresses of the Central Alpine mass. The superiority of the Monte Generoso to any of the similar eminences on the Northern outskirts

of Switzerland is great. In richness of colour, in picturesqueness of suggestion, in sublimity and breadth of prospect, its advantages are incontestable. The reasons for this superiority are obvious. On the Italian side the transition from mountain to plain is far more abrupt; the atmosphere being clearer, a larger sweep of distance is within our vision; again, the sunlight blazes all day long upon the very front and forehead of the distant Alpine chain, instead of rising and sinking behind it, as it does upon the northern side.

From Mendrisio, the village at the foot of the mountain, an easy mulepath leads to the hotel, winding first through English-looking hollow lanes with real hedges, which are rare in this country, and English primroses beneath them. Then comes a forest region of luxuriant chestnut-trees, giants with pink boles just bursting into late leafage, yellow and tender, but too thin as yet for shade. A little higher up the chestnuts are displaced by wild laburnums bending under their weight of flowers. graceful branches meet above our heads, sweeping their long tassels against our faces as we ride beneath them, while the air for a good mile is full of fragrance. It is strange to be reminded in this blooming labyrinth of the dusty suburb roads and villa gardens of London. The laburnum is pleasant enough in St. John's Wood or the Regent's Park in May-a tame domesticated thing of brightness amid smoke and dust. But it is another thing to see it flourishing in its own home, clothing acres of the mountain-side in a very splendour of spring-colour, mingling its paler blossoms with the golden broom of our own hills, and with the silver of the hawthorn and wild cherry. Deep beds of lilies-of-the-valley grow everywhere beneath the trees; and in the meadows purple columbines, white asphodels, the Alpine spiræa, tall, with feathery leaves, blue scabius, golden hawkweeds, turkscap lilies, and, above all, the exquisite narcissus poeticus with its crimson-tipped cup, are crowded in a maze of dazzling brightness. Higher up the laburnums disappear, and flaunting crimson peonies gleam here and there upon the rocks, until at length the gentians and white ranunculuses of the higher Alps displace the less hardy flowers of Italy.

About an hour below the summit of the mountain we came upon the inn, a large clean barrack, with scanty furniture and snowy wooden floors guiltless of carpets. It is big enough to hold about a hundred guests; and Doctor Pasta, who built it, a native of Mendrisio, was gifted either with much faith or with a real prophetic instinct. Anyhow he deserves commendation for his spirit of enterprise. As yet the house is little known to English travellers: it is mostly frequented by Italians from Milan, Novara, and other cities of the plain, who call it the Italian Righi, and come to it, as cockneys go to Richmond, for noisy picnic excursions. or at most for a few weeks villegiatura in the summer heats. When we were there in May the season had scarcely begun, and the only inmates besides ourselves were a large party from Milan, ladies and gentlemen in holiday guise, who came, stayed one night, climbed the peak at sunrise, and departed amid jokes and shouting and half childish play, very unlike the doings of a similar party in sober England. After that the stillness of death descended on the mountain, and the sun shone day after day upon that great view which seemed created only for ourselves. And what a view it was! The plain stretching up to the high horizon, where a misty range of pink cirrus clouds alone marked the line where earth ended and the sky began, was islanded with cities and villages innumerable, basking in the hazy shimmering heat. Milan, seen through the Doctor's telescope, displayed its Duomo perfect as a microscopic shell, with all its exquisite fretwork, and Napoleon's arch of triumph surmounted by the four tiny horses, as in a fairy's dream. Far off long silver lines marked the lazy course of Po and Ticino, while little lakes like Varese and the lower end of Maggiore spread themselves out, connecting the mountains with the plain.

Five minutes' walk from the hotel brought us to a ridge where the precipice fell suddenly and almost sheer over one arm of Lugano lake. Sullenly outstretched asleep it lay beneath us, coloured with the tints of fluor spar, or with the changeful green and azure of a peacock's breast. The depth appeared immeasurable. San Salvadore had receded into insignificance: the houses and churches and villas of Lugano bordered the lake shore with an uneven line of whiteness. And over all there rested a blue mist of twilight and of haze, contrasting with the clearness of the peaks above. It was sunset when we first came here; and, wave beyond wave, the purple Italian hills tossed their crested summits to the foot of a range of stormy clouds that shrouded the high Alps. Behind the clouds was sunset, clear and golden; but the mountains had put on their mantle for the night, and the hem of their garment was all we were to see. And yet-over the edge of the topmost ridge of cloud, what was that long hard line of black, too solid and immovable for cloud, rising into four sharp needles clear and well defined? Surely it must be the familiar outline of Monte Rosa itself, the form which every one who loves the Alps knows well by heart, which picture-lovers know from Ruskin's woodcut in the Modern Painters. For a moment only the vision stayed: then clouds swept over it again, and from the place where the empress of the Alps had been, a pillar of mist shaped like an angel's wing, purple and tipped with gold, shot up against the pale green sky. That cloudworld was a pageant in itself, as grand and more gorgeous perhaps than the mountains would have been. Deep down through the hollows of the Simplon a thunderstorm was driving; and we saw forked flashes once and again, as in a distant world, lighting up the valleys for a moment, and leaving the darkness blacker behind them as the storm blurred out the landscape forty miles away. Darkness was coming to us too; though our sky was clear and the stars were shining brightly. At our feet the earth was folding itself to sleep; the plain was wholly lost; little islands of white mist had formed themselves, and settled down upon the lakes and on their marshy estuaries; the birds were hushed; the gentian cups were

filling to the brim with dew. Night had descended on the mountain and the plain; and the show was over.

The dawn was showing pink in the east next morning, when we again scrambled through the beech scrub to the point above the lake. Like an ink-blot it lay, unruffled, slumbering sadly. Broad sheets of vapour brooded on the plain, telling of miasma and fever, of which we on the mountain, in the pure cool air, knew nothing. The Alps were all there now-cold, unreal, stretching like a phantom line of snowy peaks, from the sharp pyramids of Monte Viso and the Grivola in the west to the distant Bernina and the Ortler in the east. Supreme among them towered Monte Rosa-queenly, triumphant, gazing down in proud pre-eminence as she does when seen from any point of the Italian plain. There is no mountain like her. Mont Blanc himself is not so regal; and she seems to know it, for even the clouds sweep humbled round her base, girdling her at most, but leaving her crown clear and free. Now, however, there were no clouds to be seen in all the sky. The mountains had a strange, unshriven look, as if waiting to be blessed. Above them, in the cold grey air, hung a low black arch of shadow, the shadow of the bulk of the huge earth, which still concealed the sun. Slowly, slowly this dark line sunk lower, till, one by one, at last, the peaks caught first a pale pink flush; then a sudden golden glory flashed from one to the other, as they leapt joyfully into life. It is a supreme moment, this first burst of life and light over the sleeping world, as one can only see it on rare days and in rare places like the Monte Generoso. The earth-enough of it at least for us to picture to ourselves the whole-lies at our feet; and we feel as our Saviour might have felt, when from the top of that high mountain he beheld the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them. Strangely and solemnly may we image to our fancy the lives that are being lived down in those cities of the plain: how many are waking at this very moment to toil and painful weariness, to sorrow, or to "that unrest which men miscall delight;" while we upon our mountain buttress, suspended in mid-heaven and for a while removed from daily cares, are drinking in the beauty of the world that God has made so fair and wonderful. From this same eyrie, only a few years ago, the hostile armies of France, Italy, and Austria might have been watched moving in dim masses across the plains, for the possession of which they were to clash in mortal fight at Solferino and Magenta. All is peaceful now. It is hard to picture the waving cornfields trodden down, the burning villages and ransacked vineyards, all the horrors of real war to which that fertile plain has been so often the prey. But now these memories of

Old, unhappy, far-off things, And battles long ago,

do but add a calm and beauty to the radiant scene that lies before us. And the thoughts which it suggests, the images with which it stores our mind, are not without their noblest uses. The glory of the world sinks

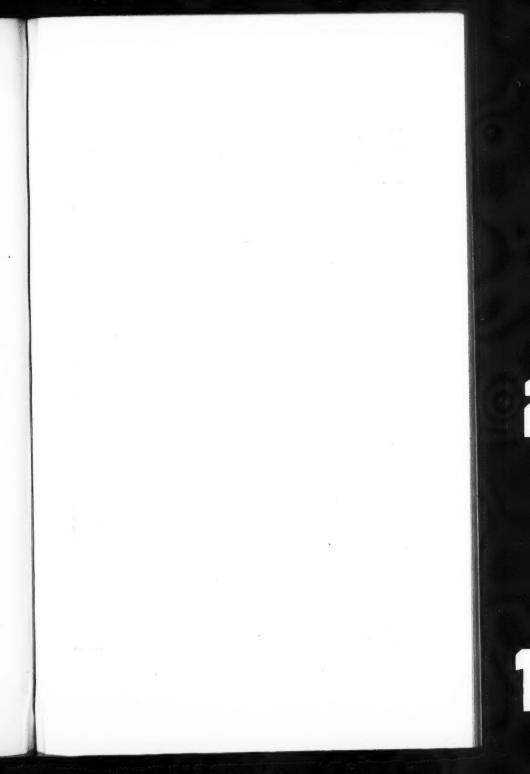
deeper into our shallow souls than we well know; and the spirit of its splendour is always ready to revisit us on dark and weary days at home with an unspeakable refreshment. Even as I write I seem to see the golden glow sweeping in broad waves over the purple hills nearer and nearer, till the lake brightens at our feet, and the windows of Lugano flash with sunlight, and little boats creep forth across the water like spiders on a pond, leaving an arrowy track of light upon the green behind them, while Monte Salvador with its tiny chapel and a patch of the further landscape are still kept in darkness by the shadow of the Generoso The birds wake into song as the sun's light comes: cuckoo answers cuckoo from ridge to ridge: dogs bark; and even the sounds of human life rise up to us: children's voices and the murmurs of the market-place ascending faintly from the many villages hidden among the chestnut-trees beneath our feet; while the creaking of a cart we can but just see slowly crawling along the straight road by the lake is heard at intervals.

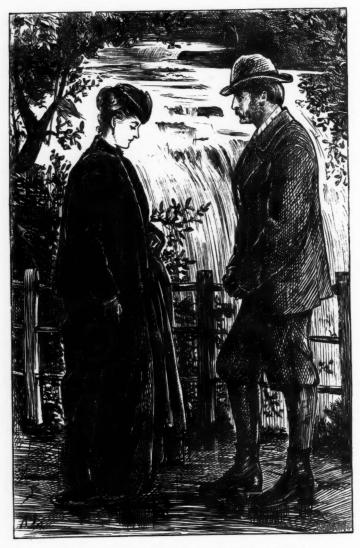
The full beauty of the sunrise is but brief. Already the low lake-like mists we saw last night have risen and spread, and shaken themselves out into masses of summer clouds, which, floating upward, threaten to envelop us upon our vantage-ground. Meanwhile they form a changeful sea below, blotting out the plain, surging up into the valleys with the movement of a billowy tide, attacking the lower heights like the advance-guard of a besieging army, but daring not as yet to invade the cold and solemn solitudes of the snowy Alps. These, too, in time, when the sun's heat has grown strongest, will be folded in their midday pall of sheltering vapour.

The very summit of Monte Generoso must not be left without a word of notice. The path to it is as easy as the sheep-walks on an English down, though cut along grass-slopes where a roll would end in death. At the top the view is much the same, as far as the grand features go, as that which is commanded from the cliff by the hotel. But the rocks here are crowded with rare Alpine flowers-delicate golden auriculas with powdery leaves and stems, pale yellow cowslips, soldanellas at the edge of lingering patches of the winter snow, blue gentians, and the frail, rosytipped ranunculus called glacialis. Their blooming time is brief. When summer comes the mountain will be bare and burned like all Italian hills. The Generoso is a very dry mountain, silent and solemn from its want of streams. There is no sound of falling waters on its crags; no musical rivulets flow down its sides, led carefully along the slopes, as in Switzerland, by the peasants, to keep their hay-crops green and gladden the thirsty turf throughout the heat and drought of summer. The soil is a Jurassic limestone: the rain penetrates the porous rock and sinks through cracks and fissures, to reappear above the base of the mountain in a full-grown stream. This is a defect in the Generoso, as much to be regretted as the want of shade upon its higher pastures. Here, as elsewhere in Piedmont, the forests are cut exclusively for charcoal, the beechscrub, which covers large tracts of the hills, never having the chance of growing into trees much higher than a man. It is this which makes an Italian mountain at a distance look woolly like a sheep's back. Among the scrub, however, lilies-of-the-valley and Solomon's seals delight to grow; and the league-long beds of wild strawberries prove that when the laburnums have faded, the mountain will become a garden of feasting.

At mid-day, when the mountains are wrapped in cloud, the plain becomes distinct again, backed to the southward by a range of hills not seen till now, which, sweeping round the valley of the Po from near Turin, joins the Maritime Alps above Genoa, and ends at last in a distant filmy line-the Apennines beyond Parma. What a sweep of plain it is! How strangely chequered with cloud-shadows, forests, cities, and the spreading pasture-lands of Lombardy! To look at it alone is enough for a long summer's day. Meanwhile, we have some books-Ariosto, and Guarini, and Tassoni whom we have learned to like in Modena and Ferrara-and behold! an obliging waiter comes to entertain the English folks with their native literature, three volumes of the Family Herald bought by him at Dover while in service at the "Lord Warden." Doctor Pasta, too, brings us his telescope, and tells us how he came to think of building his hotel upon the mountain, and adding many curious tales of his experiences when practising among the peasants of Mendrisio. It seems that he had frequently to cure them of snake-bites and of poisonings from toadstools that grow among the chestnut woods. Wandering through this beautiful lake country we feel an odd sense of insecurity when told that no prudent peasant goes forth to labour in his vineyard without taking a bottle of ammonia in his pocket as a remedy against probable bites of adders. As to the funguses, the poisonous and harmless kinds are sufficiently well known; but so careless are the villagers that they entrust the gathering of them sometimes to children. Thus they are dried and eaten without proper supervision.

After this fashion the days on Monte Generoso go lazily by, and sadly at last we bid farewell to the mountain and its glorious views. Descending once more into the plain, we find ourselves towards evening on the terrace of the Bellevue Hotel at Cadenabbia, where flashily-dressed American ladies and supercilious English people of apparent fashion are lounging, gossiping, flirting, passing their time as best they can beneath the burden of intolerable heat, making us feel as if we had never been away. Beautiful as the scenery may be, this languid life of the Italian lakes is not really good. It breeds an indolence which takes away even the capacity of enjoyment, whereas upon the mountain there was always enough of Alpine feeling in the air to temper the Italian summer. There the vigorous life of the Swiss mountains seems at hand, while here the same hills like a stifling garden-wall shut us in and stupefy us by their very beauty.





LUCY FOUND HERSELF BROUGHT FACE TO FACE WITH A PROPOSAL.

Against Time.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE APPLES OF DISCORD.



OME days later, and a chorus from the "Kennels," a grinding of wheels on the gravel, followed by a peal at the bell, disturbed four gentlemen dallying over a late luncheon at Killoden—George and Hugh Childersleigh, Lord Rushbrook, and McAlpine. The rain was descending in torrents; the party were close prisoners, and the resources of the day had to be economized.

"Who the deuce have we here?" said Hugh, drawing back his chair; "visitors, and on a day like this?"

"It looks like it," yawned

Rushbrook; "that bell rings the death-knell of your afternoon rubber, McAlpine."

"No doubt whatever about an arrival. I can hear them peeling now in the hall. Well, here goes to do the hospitable," said George, rising deliberately and moving very leisurely towards the door. At that moment it was flung open, and disclosed his brother standing on the threshold.

"What, you here, Purkiss? this is an unexpected pleasure."

"I don't see why it should be then," retorted Purkiss, shortly, by no means over-charmed at the sight of the party in possession, none of whom he greatly cared for. He embraced them in a somewhat cavalier bow, returned with about equal cordiality, as he observed to George, "My father must have got my letter yesterday morning."

"I daresay he did; but, as it happens, he is away from home. Did not the servants tell you?"

"No, confound them; at least they muttered something I didn't listen to. Where is Sir Basil gone?"

"Gone to spend a week with Huskisson at Ardmore."

"He hasn't taken the girls with him?"

"To be sure he has; they'll be equally surprised and gratified to

learn you regretted it."

"Pshaw! Oh, by the way," rejoined Purkiss, seemingly rather inconsequently, "I've got Hemprigge here with me. I had quite forgotten him; but he came to see you, Hugh, on important business. Really I beg your pardon, Hemprigge," he went on, turning towards the passage; "the truth is, I was annoyed, for your sake, at finding we had missed my father."

Hemprigge entered, rather black from his unceremonious reception and the cold news that had reached his ears. With all his well-tried composure he started, and was visibly put out when he found himself face to face with the occupants of the room. It was bad enough to deal with Hugh embarrassed by an uneasy conscience, but to have the sarcastic Rushbrook, the shrewd McAlpine for witnesses of the awkward meeting, was a veritable trick of the Evil One. George Childersleigh, however, came forward with much courtesy to do the honours, and atone for his tardy welcome by an extra display of cordial hospitality. Hemprigge clung to his proffered hand like a drowning man, exhausting himself in elaborate acknowledgments of his civil commonplaces. He felt Hugh was looking on in an impatience none the less intense that he contrived to smother its outward signs; that he was watching terrier-like to spring upon him for explanations. But, at all hazards, Hemprigge must collect his thoughts, and he found his thoughts strangely slow to gather themselves at his call.

At last Hugh lost all patience and interfered: seized him by the arm and dragged him off to the window, with an "Excuse me if I claim precedence of the luncheon and other people for a moment's tête-à-tête, but we are all friends here, and all more or less interested in the Crédit Foncier." The truth was, he fancied nothing short of imminent disaster could have brought Hemprigge there, and that gentleman's evident reluctance to break the news confirmed him in the idea. "Well, Hemprigge," he whispered, "what has gone wrong—out with it, man—let me know the worst?"

At that moment, fond of money as Mr. Hemprigge was, he felt he would have given a trifle to be back in Lothbury.

"Oh, nothing wrong; nothing whatever, Mr. Childersleigh," he stammered.

"If so, why should you be here? Come, come, Hemprigge, don't play the child. You know me well enough to be certain I can bear the worst you have to tell."

"But upon my life, Mr. Childersleigh," repeated Hemprigge, more awkwardly embarrassed than before—it was strange the ascendancy the one man had established in the other, since those earlier days when Hemprigge rather figured as patron—"Upon my life, and I pledge you my solemn word on it, there is no misfortune whatever. It was only that

Bulgarian Irrigation scheme: I felt I ought to talk it over with you in person, and the prudence of making any further advances in the meantime to the harbour works at——"

"And this is really the case, sir? This is absolutely all?"

"As I have had the honour of assuring you, sir," returned Hemprigge, with a strong effort at rallying himself, and stopping his being ridden over rough-shod in this authoritative fashion; but he sunk his eyes before Childersleigh's cold, steady stare.

"When I left my post," resumed Childersleigh—"and it was very much at your persuasion—it was on the distinct assurance you should attend personally to all business in my absence. Therefore nothing short

of a matter of life and death should have brought you here."

" The circumstances-"

Childersleigh turned abruptly on his heel. "Now, George, I shall hand Mr. Hemprigge over to your hospitality. I see you look anxious, McAlpine, and well you may; but set your mind at rest. Everything is going prosperously, and it was nothing but a most sensitive excess of care for our interests that sent Mr. Hemprigge on his journey to the north."

One by one, the four other gentlemen sauntered out of the room, leaving the new arrivals to their meal.

"I'm really sorry, Hemprigge, I should have brought you so far on a wild-goose chase," began Purkiss, who, to do him justice, was greatly vexed for more reasons than one. "None the less so, that it seems to have excited some unpleasantness between you and that most overbearing chief of yours."

"Never mind that, Childersleigh. Perhaps he may find he has the

greater reason for regret in the long run."

"I pray it may be so; but then to miss the ladies after all your trouble."

"Of a piece with my luck through all that business," returned Hemprigge gloomily. "However, one thing is gained; the party here appears to be broken up, and when they come up to town——"

"Which they will in a very few weeks at latest. You shall come to The Cedars' as often as you please, and manage matters as you please.

So cheer up and help yourself to sherry."

"Well, what brought him here, Childersleigh, if it's a fair question?" McAlpine broke out, when Hugh joined him in another room.

"A perfectly fair question, but one I can't answer. All I can tell you is, it was not the Bulgarian Irrigation loan, as he says."

"Possibly he has some of the weaknesses as well as the vices of our common nature," suggested Rushbrook; "and simply wanted a holiday. There, I must confess, I should sympathize with him."

Hugh shook his head. "Hemprigge is as little given to holiday-making as any man I know; and this is the last time or place he'd have taken one. No, he had some pressing reason of his own for coming—and

now it becomes simple matter of business to find it out, as I infallibly shall before many weeks are over," he added, after a pause.

"When can you spare me an hour, Childersleigh?" began the subject of the conversation softly, when, a little later, Purkiss ushered him into the morning-room. He had recovered all his composure, with his usual manner of familiar deference.

Hugh looked at his watch. "As it chances, I have precisely the hour you ask at your disposal, Mr. Hemprigge. At four the carriage comes to the door, that takes me to Scalltown—unless, indeed, I can offer you a seat in it; or will the business keep till we meet in Lothbury?"

"You leave Killoden then?"

"Yes, for London. I sleep in Scalltown to-night; take leave of Sir Basil to-morrow morning—he is staying with a friend in the neighbour-hood; and go on by the afternoon train."

All the composure Hemprigge had mustered was gone again. The undisguised contempt with which Hugh disposed of his pretence of important business, the jealousy excited by his expressed intention of taking leave of the ladies—who would go a yard out of his way to say good-by to Sir Basil?—not only made him lose his temper, but eager to show he had lost it. Mr. Hemprigge, in short, was fairly upset with his plans, and so in a measure was Hugh Childersleigh; and for once the two men mutually forgot themselves, and showed each other their hands. Hemprigge replied shortly—

"You must be judge in the last resort, Mr. Childersleigh, of what is for the interests of the Company. You treat as matter of no consequence the business that seemed to me worth a most inconvenient journey. Very well; the responsibility rests with you, and I leave it there and have nothing more to say—here at least. For your kind offer of a seat, as you have done so much to lighten my mind, I shall decline it. I stay here to-night as Mr. Purkiss's guest, and to-morrow go southward by the other coast. They tell me the scenery is magnificent."

"Just as you please," returned Hugh negligently, and his eyes met those of his subordinate, now openly insubordinate for the first time; yet he scarcely regretted the event that had changed faint suspicion into something approaching certainty. At that moment he decided Hemprigge was dangerous—if he were so, it was far better he had sprung his rattles.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE OTTOMAN LOAN.

As might have been anticipated, no one who had assisted at the first meeting of the Chairman and Managing Director on their return to town, could have guessed the terms on which they parted. Each knew the other too well to be apprehensive of any awkwardness, and they met accordingly on a perfectly unembarrassed footing. Their relations were altered, of course, and now Childersleigh could congratulate himself on the absence of the friendly familiarity he had broken himself to tolerate. With the exception of one or two commonplace remarks interchanged when they were alone, as simple matter of precaution against their finding themselves together in company, their conversation limited itself strictly to business; but it was conducted with much civility, and an apparent absence of all distrust and reserve. Hemprigge was far too clever to continue cordial; even had it been more imprudent, perhaps he would have indulged himself in the luxury of being distant with the man he had cause to hate. But, in truth, he had made up his mind that coolness was his wisest tactics. He might easily convince Childersleigh his individual interests guaranteed his fidelity to those of the business; he could never hope to persuade him again of his personal devotion.

Those meetings of the Court now-a-days gave Childersleigh some uneasiness, caused him sometimes to think remorsefully of the pleasant Capua, where he had whiled away a full month of his precious time. He tried to set it down to his own over-susceptibility, yet a succession of little incidents told him his influence was imperilled, if not shaken; that he was something less than the autocrat he had been. Men who used to hear his opinions only to assent, now, while he was speaking, cast involuntary glances at Hemprigge. That gentleman may have looked more than he said, but somehow discussions arose oftener than of old, and were more prolonged. When he was prevailed upon to express his views, although he generally ended by subscribing to the proposals of the Governor, yet it was only after a most flattering review and forcible statement of the opinions of those who had opposed them. Right or wrong, Childersleigh came to the conclusion his old ally was secretly working against him; and he began to apprehend that these new-born feelings might even blind Hemprigge to his own good and the Company's. Moreover, in his self-confidence, Childersleigh believed that the nearer he came to a dictatorship, the more likely he was to win his great match. What chance would his best speed have against the steady advance of Time towards the goal that both were nearing, if clever fellows like this accursed Hemprigge took to getting in his way, perhaps even tripping him up? Hemprigge's work was done, and he would gladly have cast him aside; but for that he acknowledged it was too soon or too late. "He came in with me, he is zealous, he has brought them all to believe in him, and with great reason; for, to give him his due, he's an exceedingly sharp fellow. To remove him then, as yet at least, is out of the question; I could scarcely ask even Rushbrook or McAlpine to second me in it. No, the only thing to be done is, to hand him back quietly to the second place, to show them all he has neither strength nor pretension to match himself with me; and, by-and-by, when I regain my strength, if I still think him worth the breaking-why, I'll do it."

If Childersleigh saw in the breach between him and Hemprigge a faint

speck against the bright blue sky, no one else could detect the shadow of a cloud. Never had the Company promised more brilliantly; although that, indeed, might have been said of it on each successive day since it flashed up meteor-like from its creator's brain. Its career had been one of unchecked advance, as registered by the voice of commercial opinion, and tested by those presumably infallible barometers—the sharelists. It had ridden buoyantly on the swelling flood of prosperity, that on its broad bosom was bearing thousands to wealth. For the first time in her history, England began to awake to some glimmering knowledge of the unsuspected depth of her resources. Credit inflated itself like a monster balloon, floating to giddy heights the elastic car that seemed to have places in it for every one. The soft breezes that wafted it sat steady as trade-winds in fair quarters, and up in those spheres the atmosphere was so exhilarating that none were found to doubt of the success of the voyage. Confidence was contagious, growing to temerity with all, to madness with some. The cool Childersleigh kept his head far better than most; but, breathing the air he did, it was impossible mortal man should altogether escape the prevailing epidemic. Nor was he quite so much of a free agent as he had been; and, to change the metaphor, three-fourths of his officers and all his crew were more or less intoxicated. Men had taken to accepting liabilities as lightly as invitations to dinner, and the country was pledging itself pleasantly and easily for sums that would have drained the strong boxes of the world. In spite of yourself, you were hurried along with the rest; if you made a bold effort to be singular, and tried steering by your native caution, you were altogether out of the race, and might as well drop your anchor where you were. Nearly all that man in his position could do, it must be confessed Childersleigh did. He carefully looked out for shoal water, with its ugly sunken reefs, and kept his eye upon the sky, ready to strike his sails at the first warnings of the storm. He never shared the common illusion, or believed in the arrival of a commercial millennium. He knew what others seemed to have forgotten-that these favouring gales could not possibly last for ever. The best he hoped for was to use them while he might, and guard against danger when they changed.

The Company's transactions were enormous, swelling and spreading every day. The schemes it gave birth to, or fostered, proved each of them a fresh mine to its lucky shareholders. The handsome promotion money was but a modest proportion of the gain each new connection brought. The dividends declared would have seemed fabulous to any of the generations that had speculated and ruined themselves since the bursting of the South Sea Bubble; yet the grasping shareholders grumbled at the sums the prudence of the Directors insisted on setting aside for the reserve. Nay, more: the Crédit Foncier and Mobilier of Turkey seemed likely not only to be a triumphant success financially, but to be really the great moral engine Dr. Silke Reynardson had fondly dreamed. The Reverend Doctor, by the way, had attempted to get up a

cabal to carry larger dividends and smaller reserves; but the influence of the Directors had outvoted him by an immense majority. However, that eloquent divine might console himself by seeing his philanthropic aspirations in a fair way of fulfilment. Sanguine politicians already spoke of the Company as a lever that might be advantageously employed for the permanent elevation of the Turkish Empire; for sapping and shaking the outworks Russia, with her Panslavonic propaganda, sought to push across the Danube. Already with its affiliated societies the Crédit Foncier was hard at work, draining and irrigating; changing swamps into cornfields, and deserts into market-gardens; running up new quarters in Constantinople, with flushed drains, and gas and water -Western luxuries-all laid on. It was deepening harbours and throwing out breakwaters in the Euxine; improving agriculture and extending commerce; snatching trader and peasant alike from the beaks and claws of the money-lending harpies who tore at the vitals of legitimate enterprise.—And all this done for "a consideration;" and indeed a very handsome one. Finally, the elder moneyed establishments connected with the East paid their young rival the compliment of being outrageously jealous of it—an apparently adverse circumstance of which Childersleigh resolved to take advantage, as he contrived somehow or other to do of most things.

The financial advisers of the Sultan had determined, for the twentieth time, "definitely to place the debt of the Empire on a satisfactory footing." This time it was a question of a new 20,000,000l. loan; the rumours of the arrangement echoed through all the Bourses of Europe, and naturally were made matter of special interest and curiosity with the Court of the Crédit Foncier and Mobilier of Turkey. It was the day of the weekly meeting: the doors of the Court-room had closed on that august body, and its members, withdrawn beyond the range of vulgar eyes and ears, were disposing of the varied business before them in a sans-façon manner that might have scandalized the uninitiated.

"Well, gentlemen, anything fresh about this loan?" began Schwartz-

"Why, yes; it's settled at last, Hemprigge assures me," replied McAlpine, taking the word—Childersleigh sat silent, busy apparently with his memorandum-book—"all settled. Tell them what you told me, Hemprigge; you can rely on your information, I suppose?"

"Unquestionably, I should say; and I think you would agree with me if I were at liberty to give you my informant's name—which, unluckily, I am not. It's for 20,000,000*l*., as we understood; the Bosphorus Bank has got it, as we expected; the preliminaries and main points are all arranged; the details will follow as a matter of course."

"The terms?"

"A Six per Cent. Stock at 67."

" Security?"

"Crown lands in Thrace, Thessaly, and Epirus; Port-dues of Smyrna, vol. xxi.—No. 125.

Beyrout, Tripoli, Alexandretta; salt-monopoly for Syria, &c.," ran off

Hemprigge, glibly.

"I haven't the remotest conception what may be the worth of that guarantee, or the meaning of half its items; but, if it covers the loan satisfactorily, it seems to me it ought to be an excellent affair."

"Unquestionably-most undoubtedly."

"Then I suppose the sooner we sound the Bank about letting us have our share in it the better. Indeed, I wonder the advances have not come from them. Eh, Mr. Governor, what do you say?"

"That it's a very gratifying sign of the times, and a proof the more

of our prosperity. The Bosphorus is jealous of us, that's all."

"They can't well refuse to let us join them,"

"They will refuse, however, I suspect. As you very justly remarked, if they had wished for our co-operation, the tender would have come from them, and come already. But, in my opinion, the Bank will never arrange this loan at all."

"What do you say, Hemprigge?" said Schwartzchild, turning to that gentleman. "You seem to know more about this business than any of us."

"Mr. Childersleigh may be right, as he usually is," said Hemprigge, bowing deferentially to the Governor; "although here I must venture to a certain extent to differ from him. Assuredly they do not want us; but then, pardon me, is there not a difference between their declining to make proposals to us and their refusing our overtures if we made them discreetly?"

"It would be a short-sighted policy on our part," rejoined Childersleigh, "courting a rebuff or giving them the occasion to boast we had

done so."

"It will be an excellent affair, as Mr. Schwartzchild said-profitable, very profitable and creditable too," murmured Hemprigge, as if to himself,

yet quite loud enough to be overheard.

"So it would be, and a monstrous pity, moreover, to let the chance slip. Eh, Thornhill, what do you say?" said Schwartzchild, taking up the Manager's soliloquy and turning to one of the merchant directors from the City, a man of great wealth and few words.

"I must say I rather agree with you, Mr. Schwartzchild. After all, business is business, and I do not know that we have the right to compromise the profits of the concern and the interest of our shareholders for the

sake of a scruple of delicacy, however worthy of respect."

"I assure you it was quite as much from policy as from pride I spoke as I did," returned Childersleigh. "My idea is, if we respect ourselves and teach others to respect us, it will pay us best in the long run." He looked round the table. Even the rare assents to his proposition were given coldly and reluctantly. It was very clear he did not carry the sense of the meeting with him-another hint to him that times had changed. He bit his lip and made an effort over himself.

"Well, gentlemen, I see you don't feel as I do; therefore, in the

circumstances, there can be no question as to the course we have to follow. Which of you charges himself with the business? In the circumstances the advances must be made, of course, quietly and unofficially."

"No man could manage it like yourself, Childersleigh," rejoined Thornhill; "but that, I suppose, we cannot expect, feeling as you do."

"No, really you must excuse me. Independently of not caring to expose myself to the rebuff I foresee, I cannot afford," he added, smilingly, "to compromise my reputation for tact by the failure a half-hearted advocacy would invite."

"Then had not Mr. Hemprigge better undertake it?" suggested

Schwartzchild.

"Thank you," said Hemprigge, hastily; "but there can be no doubt the Governor is right in regarding it as a matter of the utmost delicacy, and certainly I have not the pretension of succeeding where he fears failure. Besides, it should be undertaken by some one of us who has personal connections with the Board of the Bosphorus,—Mr. McAlpine, perhaps; I believe he is intimate with old Mr. Brounker, the late Member of Council at Calcutta. Mr. Brounker, I happen to know, has a great deal to say in the matter."

"I'd much rather you gave the commission to any one else," returned McAlpine. "I've no faith whatever in my own powers of negotiation; and although Brounker and I are old friends, he's apt to be short, and sure to be peppery. However, Childersleigh, as I tell you cordially, in my opinion the offer ought to be made, and I am willing to charge myself

with it, gentlemen, if no one else does, as a matter of duty."

"I hope you don't mind my coming forward in this way," said MeAlpine, taking his friend's arm as they stepped together into the street. "As I told you plainly, I don't agree with you. My idea is that to hold back in an affair of this sort—an affair that is become matter of public notoriety—would be straining delicacy to an excess between a couple of public companies."

"Mind you're having an opinion of your own and acting upon it?" returned Childersleigh, with his frank smile. "You can't imagine it. In any affair where honour and delicacy came in question, your opinion would shake mine. But you may remember I also rested my objection on the more practical ground, that any application from us would be a mistake—first, because it would be certainly rejected; and secondly, because the Bank would in all likelihood never carry out the loan."

"As to the first, I daresay you may be very right. At any rate, your doubts make me feel far from sanguine. For the second, assuming what Hemprigge told us to be true, I can only repeat I cannot agree with you."

"I have reason to believe Hemprigge's information to be substantially correct; in fact, I may say I know it is."

"Then what on earth makes you speak as you do? What can

possibly prevent the Bosphorus Bank carrying through the affair?"
"The Crédit Foncier and Mobilier of Turkey, McAlpine. If they

refuse us a part, what should you say to our stepping in and relieving them of the whole? "

McAlpine dropped his companion's arm that he might turn and stare at him more comfortably.

"Yes," Childersleigh continued, smiling complacently; "our business is based on rational speculation, is it not? That was the idea we emphasized."

"Rational speculation—yes, certainly," retorted McAlpine, resting

strongly on the "rational."

"And I am delighted to think the Bank grudges us the moderate share of gain we had a fair right to look for, because I see every reason to believe we can do very much better. I intend we shall be the lions instead of the jackals, that's all—land a haul of herrings instead of sprats, and realize heavily in cash and credit."

"I would like well to know how," exclaimed McAlpine, reverting, as

usual in his excitement, to his Scotch accent and idiom.

"Simply thus. It's a long story, but I'll tell it as briefly as I can, -and I know a good deal more of the secret history than Hemprigge, although I did not care to take a committee of the whole house into my confidence. When the affair was first decided upon at Constantinople, and before it got wind here, the Porte despatched Emin Pacha to Paris as its financial agent, an old acquaintance of mine, and a very clever fellow. After much parleying-unofficially-he was in full treaty with the agents of the Bosphorus Bank, and the Bank had made all its arrangements, in the event of obtaining it on satisfactory terms, for distributing the loan chiefly among English and Frankfort capitalists. At the eleventh hour a combination of Frenchmen laid their heads together to bid against the Bosphorus, Lafarge and the Société Impériale de l'Orient at their head. Emin Bey paused and waited: each day competition brought him fresh concessions and easier terms. Braithwaite, who was acting for the Bosphorus, took the alarm, as he saw the margin of profit dwindling, and his bargain, if he ever made it, likely to turn out a loss. Being a man of decision, and, in his way, a clever one, he walked straight over to Lafarge and proposed compromise and alliance against the common enemy and victim. In short, a league offensive and defensive was arranged. The Bank and the Frenchmen took advantage of the first counter-demand of the Pacha to retract all they had offered, and, executing a strategical movement in retreat, took up the earlier position occupied by the Bank before their ruinous concurrence set in. The Pacha was furious, and so was the Porte. Emin had led his Government to hope for marvellously cheap money and an unlooked-for accession of credit; for himself he had been dreaming of endless honour and glory, and heaven knows what more substantial. Now, in place of the Order of the Mejidieh, they would certainly have sent him the bowstring if it had not luckily become an anachronism. As it was, disgrace, destitution, and recall were imminent, and it became

matter of life and death for him to make, at any rate, better terms than the last the combined Shylocks were offering. So the matter rests. The capitalists believe, and Emin fears, they have nothing to do but wait. I propose that these better terms shall come from us; pique and a sense of injury will make both him and his Government eager to deal in another market. One and the other would make heavy sacrifices rather than enrich the men who have been pressing them so unconscionably."

"Well, Childersleigh," broke in McAlpine, "you're the man to make a spoon or spoil a horn, as we say in the north, only take care it isn't spoiling the horn this time. Remember, we've never done anything on the scale before, and you'll be forgetting, too, that we must be finding good strong creditable houses to bear the burden with us. Unless anger has made him lose his head, we shall have some trouble in persuading this Emin Pacha we can carry through his affair with a wet finger for him."

"All very true, only I must say you're not over-flattering in taking for granted I had overlooked it. Why, it's all as good as provided for down to the minutest details, and I intend it shall place us in a position to deal with any sums of money in future. Fortunately, our rivals have been working hard, smoothing all difficulties cut of our way. When the Bosphorus people hoped to secure the whole 20,000,000l. for themselves, they arranged to allot it, as I told you, among their home and foreign capitalists, reserving the lion's share for themselves. Afterwards, when they had to part with the half to the Frenchmen, instead of consenting to reduce their own share in common with what then they had assigned to their backers, they most short-sightedly insisted on the others being the sole sufferers, pretending the old bargain was off, and a new one on. The men they threw over were as much disgusted as Emin Bey himself, and now, like him, they only want an opportunity to be revenged. That revenge I propose to tender them, paying them a douceur for accepting it. They shall pocket the very sum the sharp-dealing gentlemen of the Bosphorus originally offered them. What do you say to it all?"

"That I had not the most remote conception of the brilliant audacity of your genius, my dear fellow. They are good names, those associates

you propose for us, I suppose ?"

"Passable. Look here: Blumenthal's ought to have 3,000,000*l*.; Wright, Currie and Wright, as much; Koch and Herrenhausen, 2,000,000*l*.; then there are Baron Schmidt, Rausch and Zimmerman, Mildmays."

"Capital, capital! but you haven't spoken to them, and, by Jove! why I utterly forgot the commission I have undertaken, and so have you."

"Quite true, and there is no time to be lost in setting about it. You must act promptly and be refused at once, or by to-morrow morning at latest."

"Mr. Childersleigh! Hugh!"

"Pooh, pooh, my dear McAlpine, don't look outraged. You don't fancy I ask you to throw the Board over? I told you in the Court-room,

I repeated it in the street, that your failure was a foregone conclusion. As you have decided on making the attempt, you must see yourself that, in the interest of the Company, and in any case, the sooner it is made the better."

McAlpine laughed. "You're not far out there, happen what may. But mind you this, Childersleigh: I'll do my very best with Brounker. Surely it's not likely I'll happen on him in a pleasant temper; but suppose he refuse, it will take some time communicating with all these houses?"

"I'll undertake to have the answer of the London men within twenty-four hours of your bringing me his refusal. A confidential agent of mine, sharp as steel and close as wax, started yesterday for Frankfort with full credentials, and a cypher in which we can communicate by telegraph. Mustapha Pacha and Rushbrook are in Paris—his lordship feting Emin Pacha and learning the progress of negotiations, of which the Turk makes little secret. Matters once in train here, I shall go over myself and see him in person. If you will only undertake the charge of the affair in the City during my absence, we shall be prepared at all points, and nothing, I trust and believe, can stop us in pushing it through; there will be nothing left to be done but sing the pæans of victory and pocket the gains."

"Stop one moment, Childersleigh. All this is very well; but don't forget you are acting without any authority from the Board."

"True, and I remember it perfectly. But it just came to this: If I had gone to them to ask for powers, I question greatly whether I should have got them, and nearly certainly the matter would have taken wind. It will be quite another thing when I bring it before them all cut and dried, with its fascinating figures in black and white. The absolute necessity for speed and secrecy must make an excuse they can never refuse to accept, especially when the pill is so handsomely gilded. If the worst come to the worst, and any discussion be raised, I shall look to my friends to rally round me and pull me through, and you must help us there."

"Surely, you may trust us. You're right enough, however, I daresay. Bringing such good news and offering the Company such a prize, they'd forgive you much more than that. But when Blumenthal and those others get to questioning you about your powers to treat?"

"I shall make a perfectly clean breast of it, tell them some of the leading Directors are in the secret, and pledge my connection with the Company for the Board ratifying anything I do. In fact, I should resign my chairmanship and sell my shares forthwith were the ratification refused."

"You risk a great deal in this business, Hugh, if you risk that," said McAlpine.

"Really next to nothing at all, for the game is as good as won before it is played. Even were it less certain, the profits are worth the risks,—well worth them," he muttered reflectively: "this business ought to make me."

"I pray devoutly it may," responded McAlpine warmly; "and now for my part of it, since it appears I must stoop that you may conquer."

Hugh's predictions fulfilled themselves from point to point, nor did the result of the interview with Brounker falsify McAlpine's estimate of his friend's temper. The old Indian, who had been chafing painfully during the whole course of the dilatory negotiation, fired at McAlpine's referring to it, and positively flared when he learned the object with which he had come. The envoy at once salved his conscience and served his friend Childersleigh by an attempt at arguing the matter, which ended in Brounker not only flatly refusing to be the channel of communication with his colleagues, but pledging his personal credit to boot that the Crédit Foncier of Turkey should never have one shilling's worth of the original scrip. The usually fervid-feeling Highlander accepted the discourteous ultimatum with the mildness of a scraph, and went off to report failure to his leader, joy in his heart and a pleasant twinkle in his eye.

Then, indeed, fairly set free to act, Hugh precipitated himself into the campaign. He showed a genius for strategy and a talent for tactics, an unflagging energy, an exhilarating sense of versatile power, that were all his own. The telegraph wires went flashing telegrams about the great European temples of Mammon; bearers of trusty messengers bore precious packets by express-trains; great moneyed names on the Continent for the first time acknowledged a common tie and brotherhood with this rising young association, whose head showed a power of combination so happy and daring. As for that head himself, if the officials of the Company, from the Managing Director to the messengers, whispered over their assiduous Governor's frequent absences, elsewhere he seemed omnipresent: now closeted in the City with some eminent capitalist; now opening and answering despatches in Harley Street; now starting coastwards in the down mail; now lunching, tête-à-tête, in London with some wary individual who claimed a siege in form before surrender; now being entertained in the cercles and restaurants of Paris by Parisians of distinction. Everywhere and always, through restless days and sleepless nights, with the same quiet, urbane manner, the same readiness of reply and felicity of retort, the same precision of fact and thought. Rising with the occasion, more than ever might he pride himself on the happy art of imposing his imperious will and well-defined ideas on those pompous potterers who fondly fancied he was accepting theirs, of persuading men who rated themselves among the field-marshals of the great army of finance, to carry a rifle in his ranks.

The day for the weekly meeting of the Court of the Crédit Foncier and Mobilier of Turkey had come round again. Yet, marvellous to relate, when it was assembled at half-past two in the afternoon, the Governor was absent, and his absence unaccounted for. Except during his stay in the Highlands, it was the first time such an incident had happened. For eight-and-forty hours no one had ever seen him, and no

one professed to know what had become of him. The Managing Director shook his head. It must have been quite an oversight with the Governor—a very unusual one, he must say—but it was singularly unfortunate he had made no sort of arrangements with a view to such a contingency, for he alone had the key to much of the business that ought to come on in due course. "In finance as in politics," Mr. Hemprigge went on sententiously to observe, "the most enlightened personal government has its drawbacks as well as its advantages;" and the majority of the meeting grumbled and gloomed assent to the invidious sentiment. McAlpine alone remained tranquil and impassive, but he sat silent. Hemprigge was studiously melancholy; the zealous Manager was so clearly put out at the delays interposed to the business he was rapt up in.

This affair of the loan, moreover, had predisposed many of the gentlemen to irritation against Hugh. They all knew McAlpine had broken down in his mission, and with the inconsistency of human nature were disposed to visit on Childersleigh the fulfilment of his forebodings of failure. A fixed opinion like his was, with a man in his position, apt to justify itself as a matter of course; had he formed a different one, he would have undertaken himself the task of arrangement; and had he done so, he must have succeeded there as he had so often before. His caprices and prejudices, then, had robbed the Company of so many thousands of net gain, of a clear per-centage of its next dividend. Thus Hugh's very merits, rising in judgment against him, became his condemnation, now that the tide of his popularity was turning. No wonder Hemprigge found it hard to look so sad as he did: it was more astonishing the cloud did not flit over from his face to that of McAlpine.

"After all," observed the latter gentleman, in deprecation of some inarticulate murmurs and vague grumbling,—"after all, we have lost nothing. The last accounts are that the loan stands in abeyance for the present: that there is a hitch somewhere that can't be got over."

"Nonsense, McAlpine. You know better than that," retorted Schwartzchild. "The Sultan must find money somehow for his next dividends, and he knows he's not likely to get it except from the men he's treating with now. Besides, time presses, and he can't afford to open up the whole lengthy business again. No, depend upon it the Bank knows what it's about, and Braithwaite's only turning the screw because he believes he can squeeze out harder terms. The delay means we shall lose more than we thought, that's where it is."

"If Braithwaite has been screwing them," broke in Theologos, who had come in while the orator was declaiming, "he must have overdone it. There's a measure in all things, as he seems to have found out. At least, they've just posted a telegram at the Stock Exchange, authoritatively announcing that the whole negotiation is at an end for good."

"A barefaced canard, no doubt," exclaimed Hemprigge.

"People believe it at any rate; they're buying Turks fast. They went up three-quarters the ten minutes I was waiting there."

"Let me remind you," interrupted Mr. Thornhill, "that time is passing, and all this utterly beside the business of the day."

"Thornhill's quite right," said McAlpine, hastily. "What's the first

thing before us, Mr. Hemprigge?"

"I can tell you what it ought to have been, sir: a question of promoting a Bonded Warehouse Company at Galatz; but with regard to that this absence of the Governor is especially unfortunate—"

"I regret deeply, Mr. Hemprigge, it should have been so, and have to tender you, gentlemen, my heartfelt apologies," interrupted a familiar voice from behind, making the speaker start as if the new comer had run a gimlet into his shoulders. It was the Governor in person, who had entered quietly, unannounced and unobserved.

Mr. Hemprigge recovered himself, and extended a hand of welcome. Mr. Childersleigh touched it on his way to take possession of the chair, which McAlpine, who had been occupying it, vacated in his favour. With him he exchanged a warm and significant pressure, and then, after some promiscuous salutations, addressed himself to the meeting.

"Yes, gentlemen, I owe you many apologies for a somewhat prolonged absence, and a seeming neglect of our interests; that it was but seeming, I hope you have done me the justice to believe, or else I have laboured

to little purpose since first we knew each other."

Hugh saw many of the faces around him look more or less consciously guilty; while some of them drooped under the clear look he directed rapidly on each in turn. "For," he went on, "it has been your business, or rather ours, which has made me since our last meeting so remiss in my attendance here. It was our business took me to Paris, whence I have just returned; and, as ill-luck would have it, I was detained by the steamer breaking an engine in mid-channel. I should have telegraphed the accident from Dover could I have foreseen the second delay at Redhill, where we were shunted for half-an-hour."

"You didn't chance to hear anything in Paris about the loan?" demanded Schwartzchild. "They have a report here that the Bosphorus

Bank has broken with the Turkish Government."

"The report is true, Mr. Schwartzchild: I can answer for it: and I was just about to suggest we should begin by disposing of this very matter of the loan."

"But the loan isn't before the meeting. What more can be said about it?" observed Schwartzchild. "Perhaps it might have been as well had we taken your advice and never moved in it; but let by-gones be

by-gones; it's no use crying over spilled milk."

"As things have turned out, Mr. Childersleigh was fortunate as usual in his forecast of the course matters were to take," observed Hemprigge, blandly; "but," he added, with an air of profound sagacity, "as it must inevitably come on again sooner or later, perhaps in the altered circumstances he might be prevailed on to reconsider his decision, and approach the Bosphorus Bank as our representative, with a view to urging our par-

ticipation in any future arrangements. I may be wrong, Mr. Childersleigh," turning to the Governor with assumed humilty; "but I almost fear you underrate the importance of a rising establishment like this being altogether excluded from an affair like that. Now, for my part, I consider even any pecuniary profit of very secondary consequence compared to the credit we may gain or lose."

An approving hum assured Mr. Hemprigge he had the feeling of the Court with him, consequently that the Governor's policy of isolation was

generally condemned.

"I am delighted to find, gentlemen, you subscribe so unanimously to Mr. Hemprigge's views, for it relieves me from some anxiety. As for him, I am delighted to assure him his fears are groundless; and, indeed, his ideas appeared to me so obvious, so indisputably sound, that I have ventured to act upon them, and even push them to greater lengths, in the conviction that I might rely with confidence on your approval. You have thought me disposed to throw cold water on your very natural wish to participate in the advantages of this contract. You have been inclined to condemn me as timid, capricious, and Quixotic. On the contrary, I was more grasping than you, and more ambitious; and now I am come to tell you I have secured for you all I hoped, and more. I have won for us a position we have never held before-subject, of course, to your approval. You longed for a portion of this 20,000,000l. Gentlemen, I can offer you the whole. I have taken upon me to sign a preliminary minute of agreement; it only waits your ratification; there it lies." And Childersleigh threw a paper on the table.

It was a veritable coup-de-théâtre. It would be little to say it regained him all his old popularity. If they had regarded him before with respect and admiration, now respect had become reverence, and admiration enthusiasm. He was the alchymist who offered to his adoring devotees the philosopher's stone fresh from the crucible. He was overwhelmed with flattery and congratulations, then with questions. These he answered in the amplest and most affable manner. When he had reason to be proud of everything, absolute unreserve was his gain and game; and, as he told an unaffected, unvarnished tale, he read in his hearers' faces he had taken out a fresh lease of his dictatorship.

So did Hemprigge. As Childersleigh turned to acknowledge the Manager's almost boisterous compliments, the twitch at the corner of the lips, the half-fierce, half-despairing gleam that just flickered in the eyes, did not escape him. They left him food for after-thought, for it struck him they meant something deeper than mere envious dislike. Let them mean what they might, for the moment, and in the flush of his triumph, he indulged himself in the indiscretion of despising them. Hemprigge was the servant again, and he far more the master than ever.

The moment his duties permitted it, Hemprigge made a rush for solitude. His feelings and his late congratulations were stifling him, and he needed free liberty to vent his grief and spite. A rapid walk, which

carried him unconsciously far into the northern suburbs, did something to calm him; and when he hailed a cab to return, hope and courage were already reviving and finding voice within him. "He marks the first game, and scores tricks on the second," was his reflection, as he mounted; "yet I'd take short odds even now he never wins the rubber."

CHAPTER XXV.

FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.

SINCE Hugh's last encounter with Hooker, in the corridor leading to Hemprigge's room, the mysterious visits of the ex-butler had been in great measure discontinued. True, they were resumed during Mr. Childersleigh's absence in Scotland, but only to cease again on his return to town. There was evidently some closer tie between the two than their mutual concern in the Company Hemprigge managed, some secret which it seemed important Childersleigh should not come to suspect. When the Governor's grand coup had tumbled Hemprigge off the pedestal he had been so laboriously rearing bit by bit, it was Hooker, of all men, to whom the Manager chose to confide the mortification he strove to hide from the rest of his world. While the impending event was as yet not even scented by the touts and scouts of the Stock markets, Hooker shared the valuable secret with the Court of the Crédit Foncier and some dozen of distinguished capitalists. The very afternoon succeeding that in which Mr. Childersleigh received carte blanche from his enthusiastic colleagues to commit them as he pleased, the two men were closeted together in Mr. Hemprigge's private apartments.

Hemprigge had told everything, bared his inmost feelings to this strangely chosen confidant, with an impulsiveness and unreserve very uncharacteristic of the man, as if conscious of some solidarity of interests between them assuring him of silence and sympathy, as if it were a relief to unbosom himself to this queer confessor, who could have no power to give him absolution for the failure both were inclined to identify with sin. Generally all Hemprigge's dealings with his fellows were marked by a continual effort to mould and influence their opinions of him. Now, simply blurting out naked truths, as if babbling a soliloquy, he left Hooker to form his own. For the time being his tightfitting mask lay at his feet, although now and again, from sheer habit, he

reached down his hand to raise it and put it on.

"So Schwartzehild"-he was concluding his pitiful tale-" so Schwartzehild, who the very day before had been raving about making a change of Governor at the next general meeting, got up and said, as he for one had to charge himself with having done Mr. Childersleigh some injustice in this matter, he was anxious to be the first to make atonement. He would beg to suggest the decided rejection of Mr. Childersleigh's proposal for joining a sub-committee to him for the purpose of carrying through the affair. He was sure they would agree with him that, on the contrary, they could do no better than leave Mr. Childersleigh to manage alone and unfettered all he had so well commenced."

"And the Court-what did they say to that?"

"Behaved like fools, or children. Assented with acclamation. Whereupon Childersleigh thanked them with that grand silky manner of his that winds the world round his fingers as long as all is going smooth; but he insisted on a colleague, for his own satisfaction forsooth, only begging them to let him avail himself of their flattering confidence, so far as to make the choice himself."

"He named McAlpine or Rolfganger, I suppose—one of his own clique, or a dummy?"

"Not a bit of it," returned Hemprigge, with a look of contempt at his companion's want of intelligence. "Of course he pitched on Schwartzchild. Don't you see, it was his game to throw pepper in their eyes?—it had an air of generosity about it; and then he knew as well as I did that Schwartzchild, in his frame of mind, and for sheer consistency's sake, would let him have his own way even more entirely than McAlpine, for instance. And think of the way that infernal Judas spoke of Childersleigh, and thought of me only a couple of days ago. Upon my soul, the folly, fickleness, and ingratitude of those men is disgusting!" moralized Hemprigge, with much bitterness. "But you say nothing," he added, suddenly breaking from the melancholy reverie he had been following, and turning sharply round on the other.

Hooker started, and roused himself too; but it was rather to bless than to breathe the curses the other evidently expected of him. At least, the first words that escaped his lips expressed an awe-struck admiration of Childersleigh. "He's a wonderful man, George; a most wonderful man." he ejaculated, deliberately subsiding again into contemplative abstraction, forgetting himself so far as to address his younger friend by his familiar Christian name. The fact was, nothing could appeal to Hooker's higher nature more irresistibly than the evidences of a superb capacity of money-making; it addressed itself to those tendencies to heroworship that lie latent somewhere in every man's idiosyncrasy, if you can only hit on the spell to conjure them. There was a struggle going on between Childersleigh and Hemprigge, and an identity of aims apparently enlisted Hooker on the side of the latter. Yet this speaking proof of the enemy's strength and gifts conquered his admiration for the moment, to the exclusion of all feeling for his ally, or even himself.

"Wonderful man, very likely," snapped out Hemprigge, tartly. "If he be, so much the worse for me and for us. One thing I do know—he has most accursed luck of his own." That theory of Childersleigh's luck was generally the cordial with which Hemprigge sought to inspirit himself under the overpowering sense of defeat and inferiority.

"He has a long head, a very long head," murmured Hooker, in

wistful, regretful tones; "he's a shrewd, long-headed, most fortunate man." Perhaps at that moment he was lamenting the fate that had driven him to stand on the wrong horse, that had bound up his own fortunes with the losing man.

Possibly Hemprigge divined, or imagined he divined, what was passing through his brain.

"Long-headed or lucky, the party is made. His gain will be our loss, and that you know as well as I do."

"The news of this loan will send up our shares like bottled stout in summer. 'Gad!' said Hooker, springing up with an agility beyond his years and habits, and dragging at his ponderous watch-chain—"'Gad, the secret may leak out at any moment. I must be off to the Stock Exchange, and buy a dozen or so for the account."

Hemprigge laid his detaining hand on the other's arm: "You may as well spare yourself the trouble. The house will be closed long before you get there. Don't look so cut up; you can have your dozen or so of shares all the same. My man has been buying freely."

"You'll let me have a score or two, then, at this morning's market

prices?"

"You said a dozen, not a score; however, dozen or score, you shall have them. Meanwhile, there are other fish frying than those sprats, and that infernal Childersleigh is hard at it."

"What! buying Credit Fonciers, and forestalling the market? What an infamous shame, and he the Governor!" ejaculated Hooker.

Mr. Hooker had his own sliding-scale of morality, and too high a respect for his kind to make his very moderate personal stature the

standard to measure them by.

"No, not that," said Hemprigge, smiling bitterly. "He agrees with you on the point of honour, does Mr. Childersleigh. When I just hinted at it, he was up on his high horse at once, with his ridiculous fine-drawn notions about officials of a Company having no right to trade in its shares on the strength of private information. But Mr. Childersleigh, honourable as he is, is as clever at hair-splitting as other things. I've every reason to believe he means discounting the announcement of this loan in such a bearing of old Turkish stocks as a single outsider seldom tries. If I'm right, and if the speculation pays, what with that, what with the forthcoming rise in the shares,—his holdings in the Company now are very large—what with his commissions and this extension that must be given to the business, he claims Miss Childersleigh's heritage to a certainty; it's I who tell you so."

"Nonsense, George, you can't mean that!" exclaimed Hooker, getting up and pacing the room in great agitation. "Why, from the very first

you always pooh-poohed the notion."

"So I did. Otherwise, do you think I'd ever have put him in the way of being rich as I have done? Perhaps I undervalued him; certainly I never dreamed of such a run of luck. Anyhow, up to yesterday I still

flattered myself he'd miss it by a mile. Now my eyes are opened, and I think differently. Unless, indeed, unless——"

"Pooh, pooh! You're down on your luck to-day, nothing more."

"I am down on my luck, and with very good reason. But it's not that. No, I knew Childersleigh's affairs to a shilling when we started this infernal Company, and I've noted his incomings and watched his outgoings ever since. I am pretty sure of what he makes, and if I don't know quite so much of what he spends, still I can guess enough for all practical purposes. Oh, you may believe me," and he shook his head.

"Ah, why did you ever take him up at all, George? Why must you

go and pitch upon him of all men in the world?"

"Why? Because, as you know very well," returned Hemprigge, savagely, "I saw he was the very man for my purpose, and was I not right? If it had only been matter of indifference to us whether he grew rich or not, acknowledge there never was a better hit."

"I always told you it was venturesome-a risky trifling with

edge tools."

"I'll swear you never told me anything of the sort," returned Hemprigge, fiercely. "You rubbed your hands and chuckled when I let you know I had him safe."

"Well, well, perhaps so. It doesn't signify a bit arguing," said Hooker, in some confusion; "and you mustn't forget that happen what

may later, he coins gold for us in the meantime."

"You never could see an inch beyond the farthing dip you carry in your brain to grope your way by; and to have a shilling to-day you'd risk the certainty of a sovereign to-morrow," rejoined Hemprigge contemptuously and eloquently metaphorical. "Don't you see it's my curse that this man's prosperity and mine are bound up together; and I'm like the man whose life hangs on the enemy's he'd give half the world to murder? If I injure the Crédit Foncier I open my own veins; every shilling I take from it is blood of my own; and yet if things go on prospering, in another year—in less than a year—he makes good his claim to all that money."

"Take shillings from the Crédit Foncier!" said Hooker, opening his eyes. "What can you be speaking of? Why, happen what may, the income you draw from the Crédit Foncier makes you wealthy; and then—

I have sunk every penny of my property in the Company."

"You never will teach yourself to look to the future, then," repeated Hemprigge impatiently; "and you make your pettifogging calculations without allowing anything for hatred. Only think what it is to be jostled and foiled at every turn by the man you made yourself—laughed at and looked down upon to boot; to feel through him you have been working heart and soul to your own loss."

"I had hoped you were far too well brought up to go in for hatred," returned Mr. Hooker, shaking his head mournfully; "or for spiting other people, especially when you've got to pay the costs of doing it yourself.

No, no "-and he passed from the melancholy to the indignant mood-"if you must harm Childersleigh, take care you don't hurt the Crédit

Foncier—the Company I've put all my savings in!"

"I can't tell you as yet what I may do. I may be compelled to act on the spur of the moment, and at any moment. Meantime, my advice to you would be-and the advice is sound, depend upon it-sell when this new loan is brought out, and wait on. You'll make a splendid thing of it in the meantime, and be on the safe side whatever happens."

"Sell!" shrieked Hooker; "sell! with the shares rising steadily every day, and premiums on fresh promotion schemes coming in every month. Sell! do you say; while every morning sees me a richer man? Sell! and give up my only pleasure, my marking the quotations of the day in the share-lists, and reading of rises in the City articles?"

"You must do as you please," returned Hemprigge coldly; "only recollect you were warned in time, and if anything should happen, don't

blame me."

"What should happen? You don't mean to do anything to hurt the Company-to hurt my property? If I thought it, George "-and Hooker's voice trembled with emotion, and his figure dilated as he rose from his chair in all the majesty of outraged virtue-" if I thought so I'd walk

straight off and put Mr. Childersleigh up to your moves."

Hemprigge looked at him queerly. "There, if you have had out all you mean to say on this subject, sit down again and change it. We row in the same boat, as you know very well, and you don't fancy, for my own sake, I'd throw you overboard. In any case the shares will be all right for some time to come, I tell you, so you needn't be in any hurry. Have you been at 'The Cedars' lately?"

"Not for some days past, and I've seen nothing of the girls since they

came back. How do things stand with you in that quarter?"

"I don't well know, and I don't very greatly care. Better rather than they were, I think. That prig Purkiss gives me the run of the house. I can turn him round my finger, at any rate. One thing is, of late Childersleigh comes there very little."

"A good thing too-a great point gained-everything, indeed," rejoined Hooker, his fluttering fear of Childersleigh breaking out again, to

the huge irritation of Hemprigge, who went on hastily,-

"No, it's very far from everything: if there were no Childersleigh in the world-and I'm sure I wish to heaven there were not-there's the stupid girl herself. Upon my soul, sometimes, as things are, I hesitate."

"No, no, don't say that, George, don't say that," interrupted Hooker eagerly. Strange the fascination the girl exercised over men so dissimilar. "It'll all come right yet, never fear, if you only stick to her; and she can't possibly refuse you if you go the right way to work; rich, and clever, and good-looking as you are. Next to Childersleigh-"

"Confound Childersleigh! Am I always to have that infernal name

dinned into my ears and thrown in my teeth?"

"Well, well," said the other soothingly, "I meant no harm. But it was the girl we were talking of. How do you get on with her?" he asked, with a paternal interest.

"Oh, pretty tolerably. I've hunted up a common object, found a common subject of talk. You'd never guess it. I've taken up with an Institution for the Widows and Orphans of Bankers' Clerks; they were building it out by the Heath, but it had come to a standstill for want of funds. Men like Sir Basil never get past the first hundred guineas. I came to the rescue with a munificent donation, given anonymously, you understand; but Purkiss most unluckily let the cat out of the bag—ha, ha, ha! Then, having been dragged into the light, much to my disgust, I did violence to my modesty, and made the best of it. I acknowledged the profound interest I took in many similar charities, and put myself to considerable trouble in removing some legal difficulties as to the site of this one. In fact, I'm honorary secretary to the ladies' committee, and obliged, in course of business, to be in constant communication with its members. You must have seen the secretary's name figuring in the charitable advertisements?"

"My reading generally stops at the share-list and columns of advertisements," returned Hooker dryly. "Well, you've made your opportunity very cleverly, and no one knows better how to use it."

"Perhaps so; but the girls cling together like Siamese Twins. I never have three minutes of Lucy before I hear that infernal rustle of the other one's dress—I've got to know it so well. Then, though Lucy comes out of her shell, and speaks quick enough when we talk of the charity, she's back in it fast enough when she feels me treading ever so far off on the edge of delicate ground. One would fancy she was all feelers. As she sees me warm she begins to freeze."

"Do you ever meet Lord Rushbrook there?" asked Hooker, abruptly. "Luckily Rushbrook's in Paris for the time being. With his impertinent mocking manner, he's the last man next to—I mean, he's the last

man I would wish to see at 'The Cedars.' "

"You're wrong there. On the contrary, from what I hear, he's the very man likely to help you to what you want. It's not for nothing I visit at 'The Cedars,' although I am shown up to the housekeeper's instead of into the drawing-room. Rushbrook's sweet on Miss Maude and she on him, or will be; so they say there, at least. He fetched her out of a fog or something of that sort, down in Scotland, and she chooses to think he saved her life."

"I heard something of it," said Hemprigge, musingly. "Yes, I see: if her mind's filled with love-making of her own, she'll have the less time to bother herself about mine. If his lordship goes there much, with their present habits, Lucy will be always getting in the way, and the two girls will cool, if they don't quarrel. If Miss Childersleigh marries and leaves the house, why, Lucy will be forced to go too, or think herself so, which comes to the same thing. Trust Purkiss to make it too hot for her."

"Exactly; while my lord heats the iron for you, you stand quietly by ready to strike in when it's hot. Eh, what do you say to that advice? Now, do you tell me I can never see beyond my hand?" asked Hooker with much pride. The taunt about the farthing candle had been rankling in his breast.

"You know you put me out and made me say what I never meant. I was vexed and tried to vex you," returned Hemprigge, reaching him his hand. "Don't I always come to you for advice? Do I ever take an important step without consulting you? And that reminds me, I must be gone. Send over to-morrow morning to Lothbury and let me know how many of those shares you want. I'll send a memorandum of it to my broker's."

Thus Mr. Hemprigge's conversational tact brought to a pleasant termination a dialogue that had threatened at one time to end abruptly or disagreeably, and when he took leave of Mr. Hooker, the elder gentleman's face was beaming with its customary expression of benevolence.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LOVE AMONG THE THORNS.

HEMPRIGGE's jealousy had foreboded a secret before there was one. It was by slow degrees it dawned on Hugh Childersleigh that Lucy was becoming a disturbing element in his life—occupying him at times to the prejudice of all he had been most bound up in. He was startled to find masses of rich brown hair casting their shadow on columns of calculation, to meet the gaze of soft hazel eyes when he cast his own into his future. Had he found romance thus blending itself with routine in those earlier days of Harley Street, when the lovely orphan had been left by fate a shuttlecock for the battledores of Hooker and fortune, he might have set it down complacently to sheer philanthropy and his good nature. But now Maude's affection had cottoned Lucy in eider-down, and Sir Basil, who had first petted her for his daughter's sake, had come to spoil her for his own, while the subdued antipathy of Purkiss was but the dash of vinegar that gave piquancy to the sweets of her existence. Thus there was little room left him for illusions, and what there were must have been dispelled by the more than indifference with which he saw the rapprochement of Maude and Rushbrook. He had broken with the feelings of the past, was he to weave new webs to embarrass his future? To steal from the Cavalier poet, was he to tangle himself in the hair and fetter himself with the eye of Lucy Winter, when his work was still undone and while he had pretty nearly the wide world to mate himself in? Was he to perpetrate a gratuitous folly, and wantonly give society reason to condole with him on an excessively bad marriage?

The practical good sense he had cultivated with an assiduity so great

answered peremptorily in the negative. It warned him to be wise in time, and compromised with his strong liking for Lucy by telling him not to make her unhappy, but to keep away in the meantime from "The Cedars." Mr. Hemprigge's information, then, had been perfectly accurate, and since their return from Scotland Hugh had seen much less than usual of his Killoden friends. But it is given to no mortal to be always safe, and the convenances of society must have their say in the arrangements of people who live for it. Hugh did pass an occasional evening at Hampstead, enjoyed it, and came away uneasy and remorseful. With all its slight arrières pensées of wasted time, the glimpses of soft domestic life at Killoden had fallen like a cool shadow across the hot rugged paths the man must struggle up who hastes to be rich. Perhaps the reaction had set in from that first flush of pleasurable excitement with which he had learned that work is a thousand times preferable to idleness. He had fallen in love with labour, and like other cases of love at first sight, a maturer acquaintance with the object of his adoration may have made him acquainted with a multitude of jarring little incompatibilities of temper. More than before it was the sense of duty that kept him steadily faithful to the ties he had formed then; that bound him to the fulfilment of those vows of success he had solemnly taken on himself. Now he felt for the time involuntarily grateful to any one who should lull him into a moment's oblivion of the hard practical details of the life he was living; who should lure him away from thoughts of day-books and mental computations of bankers' balances-grateful at the time and often resentful afterwards. Yet with it all he did himself and Lucy so much justice as to confess in his calmer moments that the gratitude came of his higher, the resentment of his baser nature. He told himself the secret of his warming to Lucy while he cooled for Maude lay in this-that the one girl's heart vibrated in harmony with chords in the depths of his own, the other's, with her careful training and long habits of thought, had been merely in seeming sympathy with its surface. His daily life worked on no longer with its easy play of mechanism, concentrating its labour on the single purpose of winning wealth for the sake of the world. On the contrary, its daily revolution involved a perceptible struggle where something in him embarrassed him with its faint remonstrances against this prostitution of his powers to unworthy ends; something that poisoned the gains and the financial game he had once set such store by; that, like the Roman's slave, whispered him in each hour of his triumph that he was not only a mortal, but a trifling and mistaken one. It was a feeble influence as yet, but he was compelled to confess to himself that it was gaining strength; and never did he feel so strongly the irksome consciousness of its being true and right and destined to prevail in the long run, as after a quiet hour slipped away in the company of Lucy. So that now, while he was his old self again-while his well-regulated mind was swinging pendulum-like in the familiar curves-when back in the City atmosphere, and in contact with men like Hemprigge, he became

keenly alive to all he had to fear from that innocent-looking genius of evil, Miss Lucy Winter. It was then his common-sense used to confirm him in those good resolutions that only yielded, as we have said, to the conventionalities.

There was another aspiration too, and an elevated one, in its way, whence he drew strength and courage for combating these weaknesses—the idea of rebuilding his family fortunes, and living as his fathers had done, in his family home. As his hopes of returning to Childersleigh brightened, Hugh had paid it more frequent visits. He could accept Marxby's hospitalities without a pang, as the chances of the good-humoured contractor's speedy eviction began to harden into certainties. Now-a-days, in the prospect of speedily coming home to them, he found the old family portraits who smiled down on him from the oak panels, as he sipped his wine at the venerable old mahogany, the

pleasantest of company.

When he felt a depressing sense of the vanity of earthly toils, of the emptiness of human wishes, stealing strong upon him; when he was conscious of a yielding of the springs that had given him his grand élan; when he was even haunted with unwholesome visions of hermitages, angel-brightened, where, seated on the threshold in placid idleness, he might listen to the faint murmurs of the troubled world he had quitted; when perchance he dreamed in his nightmares of love and peaceful cottages, as rational people do dream, mistaking for the springs of happiness what would prove in their waking moments the bitter fountains of sorrow,—then he used to seek his favourite and unfailing tonic among the old oaks of Childersleigh Park. The church paths that crossed it were free to him with all the world, and thither he used to go, unembarrassed by the friendly presence of Marxby, and contrasting the present and its prospects with the past and its cares, would confirm in the very sanctuary of nature his wavering allegiance to Mammon. Like the giant of the old myth, in treading his mortgaged acres, he drew new strength for his grapple with the visionary promptings of unworldliness; and thus in a profounder sense than other City men, recruited for the work he had to do in town, in the fresh air of the country.

Old Patterson had renewed his youth, as the rumours of the lucky Mr. Childersleigh's growing wealth assumed marvellous development at his place in Surrey. The old man stepped about more lightly among his flowers, tending his favourites with a greater zeal and interest than ever, and, in his recovered buoyancy of spirits, took to whistling in most unmusical strains his country air of "There's nae luck about the house."

"'Deed, Mr. Hugh," he said to his master, who, coming on him unexpectedly one day, complimented him on the ease and spirit of his execution—"'Deed, Mr. Hugh, I had no heart to do it as long as I thought the gudeman was gone for good, but now that we're like to have him among us again, I make the most of what's left of the black time, that I may enjoy the more my blink of sunshine when it comes."

"A cheering bit of philosophy for us that, Patterson; but you're coming out of the shadow already. Why, man, you're an inch taller, and heaven knows how many years younger, since that morning of the funeral."

"Ay, there's many a thing happened sin' that sour winter morning, thank God; and I wouldn't say but what, among your grand other doings, you've put me on another year or two. 'Od, Mr. Hugh, it's no like the great man of business they say you're become, to go burdening yourself longer than you can help with a feckless worn-out old body," said Patterson, smiling grimly.

Hugh laughed as he stretched out his fingers for a pinch from the old man's snuff-box. "The wisest of us are sometimes left to ourselves; and, by-the-by, what I came to speak to you about now was another piece of extravagance I am thinking of. The end of the hothouses there would be the best place for a new range of pineries, would it not?"

Hugh never acknowledged to himself in so many words that he had as good as received Miss Childersleigh's money, but insensibly he came more and more to think and plan as if the inheriting it were a certainty. To be sure many men would have said that his connection with the Crédit Foncier alone might have justified his returning, if he had chosen, to his old home. But that was not Childersleigh's opinion. He had no idea of precipitating his return without carrying with him the ample means of leading a train of easy luxury; no fancy for risking a second family eclipse. It cost him little philosophy to wait. Fortune had so petted him in the last two years that he had come to pin his faith on her favours. She had been steadily filling his cup, and he hardly ever dreamed now of a slip between it and his lip.

Meantime, while he was still making strong running, and backers and layers making him the favourite in the race with time; while Lucy was tripping across the course before him, sometimes diverting his eyes and thoughts from the winning-post; while Maude, whom he had once identified with the prize, had dropped out of his life, and, busied with affairs of her own, was only watching the match among comparatively indifferent spectators—while matters were thus passing with Hugh, Lucy herself had known gnawing anxieties. The happier she had felt in her new home, the more loth she felt to leave it. Yet again she became the prey to the old curse of uncertainty; once more she began to be haunted by the old sense of desolation. After the sharp brush of buffeting that followed on Miss Childersleigh's death, she had been swept up into this sheltered nook, where she had been sunning herself pleasantly since; but, waif as she was, circumstances threatened to wash her away again into the brawling stream of life. It was not that her new-found friends had cooled to her-it was not that Maude had changed-still less was Lord Rushbrook, as Hooker had surmised, the involuntary cause of her trouble. Had it been so, she might have borne the thought of separation better. Had the ties that bound her to them all been slowly fretting themselves through, it would have been less painful to snap them. On

the contrary, Maude was never more sisterly; Sir Basil was more paternal than ever. Yet in the very affection that had adopted her, and sought to make her stay seem more natural, she only saw expulsion from the home she clung more closely to as she feared to lose it.

The lives of our personages were becoming very much a game of cross-purposes; Lucy, and that unlucky August at Killoden, seemed likely to weave the plot of a tragedy of errors. Here was honest Hemprigge, only longing for an opportunity to lay his fortune at her feet and offer her a home of her own—an opportunity which she, who had neither home nor fortune, steadily denied him. Here was Hugh Childersleigh, with a task to do, and short time to do it in, wasting precious minutes in worse than profitless speculation on her feelings and fancies. And, finally, there was George Childersleigh, who would have given his very life to make her happy, apparently bent miserably upon driving her back on the wretchedness his sister had snatched her from.

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Yes, Captain Childersleigh had fallen in with the prevailing fashion, and, like so many other people, was deeply in love with Miss Winter. Assuredly there was a force of fascination about her very dangerous to herself as to others. Hers was not the blaze of attraction that puts you on your guard. She stole somehow into the affections, and like the softvoiced witch in Thalaba, shackled you in the gossamer bonds you never felt her twine. She was just the girl to create bitter enmities in her sex, because, when they awoke to the unsuspected influence, and in the first burst of jealousy and passion, they might with so clear a conscience tax her with treachery. She was just the girl to turn an admirer's fondness to gall, because he might so easily confound her unconscious art with heartless coquetry. Then she was so clearly distrustful of herself, that no one pretending to a knowledge of mankind, who watched her quiet manners and fatally winning ways, could well fail to credit her with accomplished hypocrisy. Even Captain Childersleigh, who had no shade of ill-nature about him, and of all living men was most likely to see an angel in the woman he worshipped, could hardly rid his remorseful mind of blasphemous suspicions, when first he openly spoke his love and had his answer. Days before, while nervously hesitating about committing his happiness to a question, the Captain had been gradually opening his trenches, making his approaches more and more ostentatiously under the very eyes of the lady of his love, and supposing her amply forewarned at the moment he gave the assault, had brought himself to hope for nothing more than a mere formal resistance.

The assault had come off the morning they were to leave him behind at Killoden, to follow a few days later. Maude had gone upstairs, and was superintending the packing; and Lucy was preparing to leave the breakfast-room to follow her, when George whispered her, in a voice that his conscience perhaps made him fancy even more significantly tremulous than it was, an entreaty for one parting turn down by the borders of the lake to the little waterfall.

"To the waterfall !- oh yes, -yes, certainly, Captain Childersleigh, if you wish it," she replied, smiling, speaking and looking, as he thought, with a hopeful embarrassment. The truth being merely that she was delighted with the idea of a farewell stroll that bright morning, when all they were going to leave looked so lovely, while she felt at the same

time the path of duty led up to Maude and the maids.

George, however, put his own construction on it, and brightened accordingly, although his heart would keep thumping hard on his ribs. How he wished that noisy pack in the kennels could have been gagged, as they hailed the well-known figures with open throats, drawing on them the attention of the group of keepers and gillies who came lounging out of the neighbouring outhouses. As George acknowledged the valued dependants' greeting much more slightly than usual, he glanced back fearfully at the windows of the lodge, terribly afraid the ill-timed yelping might draw the attention of the inmates, perhaps mar the tête-à-tête and his plans for life. All was safe, however, and half reassured, he hurried Lucy in under cover of the pines; rather surprised she was at being denied her customary exchange of salutations with her musical circle of four-footed friends, setters, retrievers, and terriers.

Once through the little wood, and down by the lake, the path became narrow and broken, and Lucy picked her way in advance, her eyes on her thin-soled shoes, and her thoughts more concerned with her feet than anything else in the world, while her companion followed in silence, far less attentive than usual to the hundred chances of touching her hand and looking in her eyes, offered by the difficulties of the road. But once arrived on the little patch of slippery green, perennially watered by the

breaking spray from the brawling waterfall, she had no reason to complain of his silence. With the nervous energy of a man who distrusts his own resolution, he grappled almost roughly with the subject nearest his heart, and Lucy found herself brought face to face with a proposal when she had never dreamed of love-making. Had the waterfall shot upwards in a Geyser, had a thunderbolt fallen from the cloudless sky among the flight

of teal that floated among the rushes of the lake, she could scarcely have

been more taken aback.

George began with a beating heart, a swelling throat, and sentences sadly deficient in prepositions, conjunctions, and those secondary parts of speech that are so helpful to lucidity of expression. But soon in his earnestness forgetting himself and his tremors, he spoke and pled with all the rude poetry and eloquence of sincerity. As he spoke and watched her out of his eager eyes, he saw a cloud settle down over the vacant astonishment on her face, and its blank surprise give way to pain. love made him quick to read the signs he feared, and the sudden revulsion of hope and feeling stopped the rush of words, and sent them choking back on his heart. Had not that pained expression been so unmistakable. he might have taken her long silence for encouragement. The truth was she liked him so well, they had been such good friends, he had been so

invariably and unostentatiously kind to her, that she hated to hurt him. Then for the moment she never asked herself what her own feelings were or might be, she only thought of Sir Basil's and his daughter's. She shuddered as she pictured their regarding her as a viper they had cherished, only to sting them just when they would feel it most. She felt as if this unwelcome proposal had made her partner in a terrible sin; as if each moment the interview lasted was plunging her deeper in crime. Certainly, except for the grace of her attitude of pitiable confusion, for the soft brightness of her eyes glittering through their tears, a reptile would have been the last similitude any one would have thought of finding for her,—least of all the only witness of the scene.

"Don't let me distress you more, Miss Winter," said George, speaking at last with a violent effort. "You have said nothing, but I have heard

enough," and he turned slowly to move away.

"Oh, Captain Childersleigh," she burst out, "I never dreamed, never

suspected anything of all this."

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"Impossible, Miss Winter, impossible: you must have seen, must have guessed! but no," he said, asserting himself, "I know you are candour itself. My wretched ill-luck has taken you by surprise, when I hoped to have found you all prepared, and in short, when I thought I was managing so cleverly, I behaved more like an idiot than ever,—just like me. Well, have you any scrap of comfort for me? I should content myself with very little. Only say there's hope, and I'll leave you; just as much I mean," he added anxiously, "as there would be for any other fellow in the wide world, and I'll go away tolerably happy."

Lucy summoned all her courage for the explanation. As it chanced, his last words had made it easier to her.

"No, no, Captain Childersleigh," she said, sorrowfully; "it would be a miserable return for all your goodness, if I caused you one moment of doubt or uneasiness I could spare you. No, if anything in my power to promise were worth the hoping for, least of any one in the world could I promise it to you."

"Good God! what do you mean, Lucy-Miss Winter? That you

could never bring yourself to care for me in any case?"

"I mean," said Lucy, blushing terribly, but speaking much more firmly now, "that, happen what might, I could never listen to a son of Sir Basil's, a brother of Maude's. Just think for a moment of my position in your family, although I know your generous heart has always made you forget it."

"Your position in our family! Why, my father treats you like a

daughter; Maude loves you as her sister: and I---"

"Reason the more, surely," broke in Lucy, quickly, "that I should repay their thousand benefits, their fondness, all their confidence in me, by anticipating their wishes, instead of outraging them. Pray hear me to an end," she went on, as she saw him about to break out. "No one knows better than you, that with all his kindness to me, what you dream

of now would be the last thing Sir Basil would desire for you. If you really care for me at all, help me and be frank. Is it not so?"

"If I care?" George, in his eagerness to avoid the main issue, was impulsively throwing himself into the opening Lucy had rashly made for him.

She could hardly help smiling through her tears. "I am answered, you see," she said quietly.

"My father may have other views. I have never spoken to him—he is unprepared—he might be surprised at first—but fond of you as he is—in a short time——"

"And what would be my position meanwhile, and my feelings afterwards? I know you to be unselfishness itself. Put yourself in my place. Seeing love change to dislike, perhaps, and friendship turn into suspicion; to have Maude looking coldly on me in spite of herself. Why, for nothing the world could give to me would I submit to it!" she added, impulsively.

"Nor for any one in the world?" he asked, in a sudden spasm of jealousy, shooting in a lurid flash across a mind clouded with doubt and pain. But the jealousy passed like the lightning, and, repenting his violence, he resumed with a melancholy smile, "I forget myself, Miss Winter, but you will forgive me the fault you cause yourself; and in spite of all, I will trust something to time. You cannot have the heart to rob me of all my hope."

"Trust nothing to time," she answered, with soft decision. "Believe me, time can do nothing here—not in that way, at least. But if it be any comfort to you, be sure I suffer bitterly for the pain I may inflict. I owe you so much, and it seems so hard to be made the instrument of grieving you."

Poor Lucy felt herself treading the crest of a precipice, with an ugly gulf yawning on either hand. If she was too hard, she hurt the feelings of the man to whom she had never felt so warmly, although with a warmth without the faintest tinge of love; if she became too melting and compassionate she shook his faith in her firmness, and perhaps prepared him fresh trouble. But the interview brought itself to a close somehow, and the two had never met since they parted at Killoden. George had stayed there for some time, nursing his disappointment or combating it, and then joined his regiment without passing by London. Sir Basil grumbled that his favourite son should not have paid him the established tribute of a passing day or two en route; and Maude wrote her brother reproachful notes, and made Lucy the confidante of her indignation. And Lucy knew herself the guilty cause of all, and felt, in her self-condemnation and despair, that she must inevitably sooner or later carry into effect her self-imposed sentence of banishment.

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